



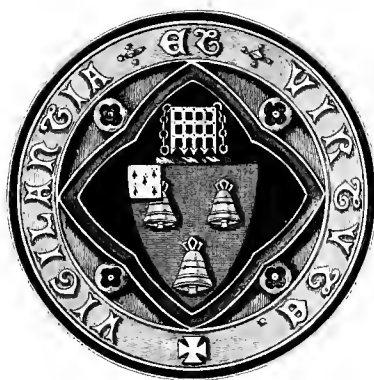
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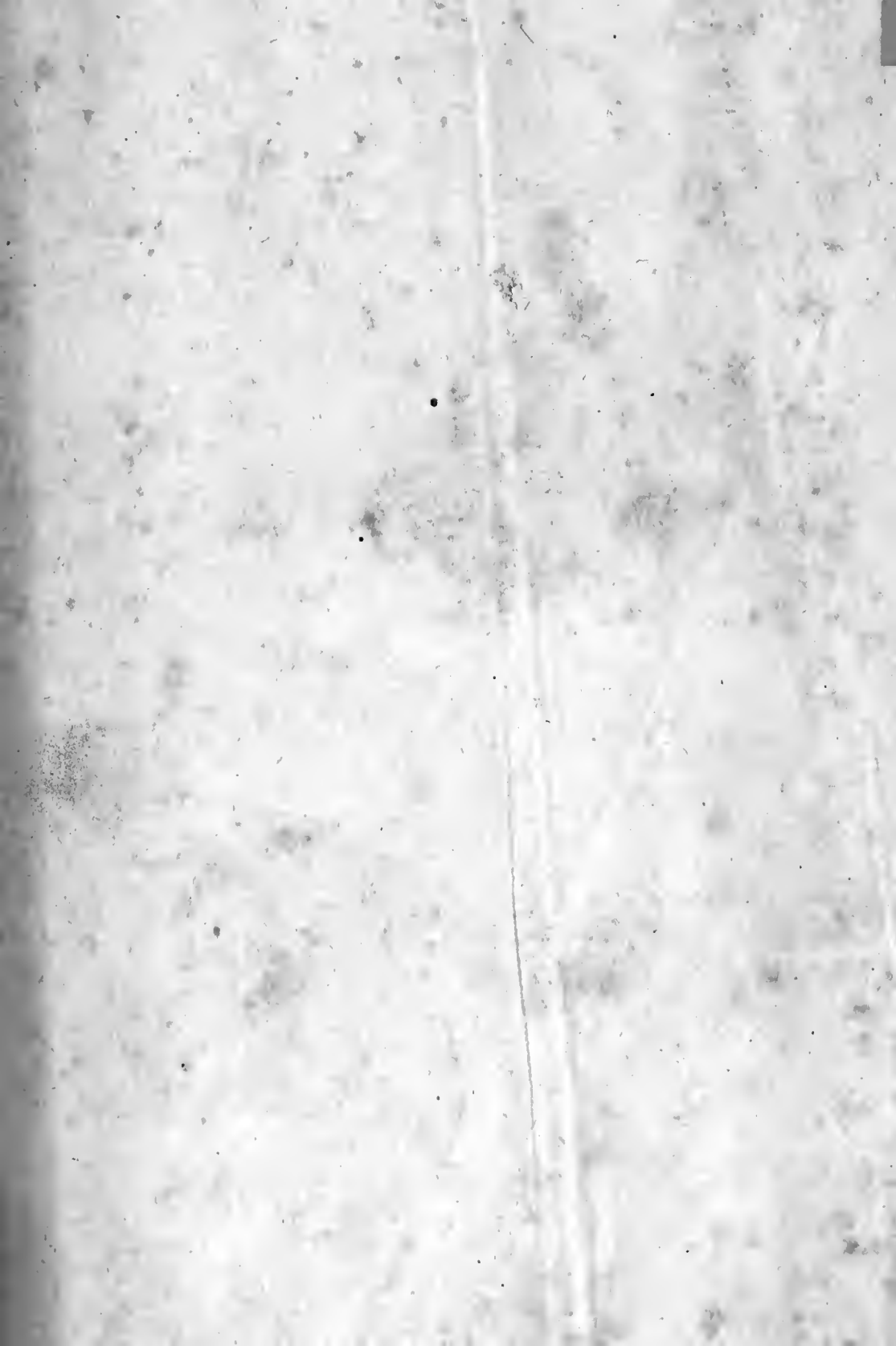
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*The Right Reverend Father in God*  
**EDWARD STILLINGFLEET D.D.**

*late Lord Bishop of Worcester. Etatis Suæ 63.*  
*Obijt March 27. 1699.*



THE  
WORKS

OF THAT

Eminent and most Learned PRELATE,

Dr. Edw. Stillingfleet,

Late LORD BISHOP of

WORCESTER.

TOGETHER WITH

His LIFE and CHARACTER.

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In Six VOLUMES.

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*The First Volume.*

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L O N D O N :

Printed by *J. Heptinstall*, for HENRY and GEORGE MORTLOCK,  
at the *Phoenix* in *St. Paul's Church-yard*. M DCC X.

1841

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FIFTY  
SERMONS

PREACHED

Upon Several Occasions.

BY THE

Right Reverend Father in GOD,

Edward Stillingfleet,

Late Lord Bishop of

WORCESTER.

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Together with

An INDEX of divers Texts of Scripture incidentally Insisted upon and Explained;

And an ALPHABETICAL TABLE of the Principal Matters contained in them.

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Printed by *J. Heptinstall*, for *Henry Mortlock* at the *Phoenix*  
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FIFTY

# SERMONS

OF

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# WORCESTER

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To the Right Honourable

ELIZABETH

Countess Dowager of

JOCELIN

L A T E

Earle of *NORTHUMBERLAND*.

M A D A M,

**A** MONG the number of those who congratulate Your safe return into Your own Country, wherein Your *Ladiship* is so justly beloved and esteemed by all that honour *Vertue* and *Goodness*, Give me leave to express my Duty in an Address more agreeable to my own *Profession*, than some perhaps will think it is to Your *Quality* and *Condition*. Those I mean who measure their *Greatness* by their contempt of *Religion*, and all that belong to it: Who know nothing of *Wit* or *Vertue* beyond the *Stage*, or think the *Leviathan* contains in it the *Whole Duty of Man*. The utmost these Persons will allow us whose Honour and Employment lies in asserting the Truth of Religion, and perswading to the Practice of it, is, that we are Men of a *Profession*, and speak for the Things we are to live

A 2 by.

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## The Epistle Dedicatory.

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by. As though *Reason* and *Religion* were such contemptible *Wares*, as scarce any would enquire after, if it were not some Mens *Trade* to put them off: and were of less force in themselves, because it is our *Duty* and *Interest* to maintain them. Is it any disparagement to a Prince to have Subjects obliged to defend his Honour, and Servants to attend his Person? and must not what they say or do be at all minded, because their own *Interest* is joyned with his? Why then should *Religion* suffer in the esteem of any, because she hath Servants of her own to defend her Cause? As if it had always been a received *Principle* with Mankind, *That no Man is to be trusted in his own Profession*. According to this the *Lawyers* ought to Preach, and the *Divines* Plead Causes; because the one gets nothing by *Divinity*, nor the other by *Law*; the *Merchant* should Visit *Patients*, and the *Physicians* Attend the *Committees* of *Trade*; because it is dangerous trusting Men in what they are most concerned to understand. When once I see these Persons forbear to consult the *Lawyers* about settling their Estates, and *Physicians* for their Health, meerly because they get by their *Professions*, I shall then think it is something else besides a *Pique* at *Religion*, which makes them so ready to contemn whatever is said by us in behalf of it, because, forsooth, *it is our Trade to defend it*. I wish it were theirs as much to practise it; and then we should not be troubled with removing these and such like prejudices against all the Discourses of Religion,

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## The Epistle Dedicatory.

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Religion, which are spoken and published by us. But in these matters which we conceive to be of so high concernment to Mankind, we desire nothing may be considered besides the force of Reason, and weight of Argument; and surely none that own themselves to be Men, will despise that, by whomsoever it is brought. It is not every ridiculous story, or vulgar prejudice, or common infirmities, or different opinions in smaller things, which ought to render Religion ridiculous, or make the Practice of it be thought mean and contemptible. But however they are resolved to think of Us, let not Religion suffer for our sakes. Indeed if they did as truly love Religion as they despise us, we might then have reason to suspect our selves; but when we suffer meerly upon her account, we have cause to rejoyce in our dishonour; and ought to suspect our selves if such Persons did speak well of Us.

MADAM, The main design of these following Discourses is to recommend the great matters of Religion, from their *Truth* and *Certainty*, their *Power* and *Efficacy*, the *Benefit* and *Advantage*, which comes by them: And to dissuade from the Practice of Sin, from the *folly* and *reproach*, the *present dissatisfaction* and *future punishment* which attends it. If they may be of Use to the World, and any ways serviceable to Your *Ladiship* in Your retirements, I have the end I aimed at. And I have therefore presumed to dedicate them to  
Your

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*The Epistle Dedicatory.*

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Your *Ladiship*, not only because of the great Obligations which I have to Your *Self* and *Family*, which were first laid upon me, by that Excellent Person, the late *Lord Treasurer*, Your Father, but likewise because You have so well followed so worthy an Example in joyning *Greatness* and *Goodness* together. Were it my design to publish Your just and due Character, I should not need to find fault with the *Age* to give the greater advantage to Your *Vertue*: All the harm I wish the *Age*, is, that there were many more Persons of Your *Condition*, that did as little *need*, and as much *despise* the meanness of *Flattery*. I am

MADAM,

Your *Ladiships*

most obliged and

humble *Servant*,

ED. STILLINGFLEET.



THE  
L I F E  
AND  
CHARACTER  
OF THAT

Eminent and Learned Prelate,

THE L A T E

Dr. Edw. Stillingfleet,

L O R D B I S H O P of WORCESTER.

Together with some Account of the *Works* he has Publish'd.

**T**O give a true and lively Description of this great and deservedly celebrated Bishop, might indeed require Abilities like his own, the same Talents of Wisdom, Eloquence, Quickness of Apprehension, Depth of Judgment, and a near Insight into these several sorts of Learning he was so intimately acquainted with, and which appeared so conspicuous in all his Writings; but yet I hope the Reader will not think it Presumption in one of a very different Character, to attempt doing him some Right in this respect, rather than suffer the Memory of so every way accomplish'd a Prelate, and so singularly learned an Author to grow into decay, and by degrees lie buried in Obscurity, except among such as shall have the advantage of perusing his incomparable Writings.

It were much to be wish'd this Province had been undertaken by some abler Hand, and one who had the Happiness of a more familiar acquaintance with him, and who could thereby have been able to relate many things to his deserved Honour, which otherwise are never like to be retrieved.

But it is seldom Mens lot to have their due *Encomium* given them when gone, howsoever admired and celebrated whilst alive. The Judicious and Pious Mr. *Hooker*, Author of the justly admired Books of

*Ecclesiastical Polity*, had been laid in his Grave considerably longer than he lived, before any Attempt was made towards writing his Life; though afterwards he had Right done him, by that Ingenuous and Faithful *Biographer*, Mr. *Isaac Walton*; not to mention the Relation of another, a much greater, but less accurate Writer; who taking Things upon trust, without a due Examination, thereby suffered himself to be led into divers notorious Mistakes concerning him. How many too have we known in our own Days, of high Station, and singularly renown'd for their great Abilities, and the remarkable Services they had done either to Church or State, who have yet had no other Memorial preserved of them, than perhaps a short Inscription upon their Monuments?

Those therefore are not to be blamed, who (whilst others who are better qualified to praise Great Men, are wholly silent) cannot contain from lamenting their loss, and attempting to recommend their noble Examples to the Admiration and Imitation of future Generations: Such especially as this great Prelate, whose Accurate, Judicious and Nervous Writings, full of all sorts of Learning, shew him to have had a just Title to *Livy's* Character of *Cato* (L. 59. C. 40.) *Natum ad id unum diceres quodcunque ageret*; whose Performances were so compleatly admirable in their kind, as if he had apply'd himself but to that one sort of Study; and yet the Compass of them was of such extent, and the Subjects treated of so various, that had he not been a Person of incomparable Parts as well as Diligence, it is not conceivable how he should ever have attained to a much less measure of Understanding in them all.

He was descended from the Family of the *Stillingfleets* of *Stillingfleet*, about four Miles from *York*, where his great Grandfather *John Stillingfleet*, Esq; Brother to *Cuthbert Stillingfleet* Abbot of *York*, had a fair Estate; and he was the Seventh Son of *Samuel Stillingfleet*, Gent. and *Susanna* his Wife, the Daughter of *Edward Norris* of *Petworth* in *Suffex*, Gent. who was his Godfather as well as Grandfather, and from whom he receiv'd the Name *Edward*. He was born *April* the 17th. 1635, at *Cranbourn* in *Dorsetshire*, a place of some note formerly for a Monastery founded there by a Nobleman named *Aeilward*, in the Year 930, and which has had the Honour done it since, to have the Earls of *Salisbury* to this Day bear the Title of Viscount *Cranbourn*; where besides the Education and Instructions he had from his Parents in his tender Years, as soon as his Age capacitated him for it, he was committed to the Care of Mr. *Thomas Garden*, Schoolmaster there, a Man of Eminence and Character in his Profession.

Under whom he made so considerable a Progress, that here he continued till the time drew on, that it would be proper to settle him in the University. In order whereunto he was removed for a while to *Ringwood* in *Hampshire*, and put under the care of Mr. *Baulch*, with the view of an Exhibition, anciently given for such Scholars as should be elected thence to either of the Universities, by *William Lynne*, Esq. Founder of that School.

Hence he was elected at *Midsummer*, 1648, and *Michaelmas* next following he was admitted into *St. John's Colledge* in *Cambridge*, under the Tuition of Mr. *Pickering*, one of the Fellows, and about six Weeks after, on *November* the 8th. was admitted a Scholar of the House upon the Right Honourable the Earl of *Salisbury's* Nomination.

In which lower station he acquitted himself with such Applause, and was taken so much notice of for his singular Ingenuity and constant Improvement of it by a diligent Application to his Studies, that no sooner had he commenced Batchelour of Arts, but the very next Election he was chosen a Fellow of the College, and admitted as such *March* the 31st. 1653. that so he might not want any advantages in order to the better progress and success in his Studies, which an Academick Life affords, nor the College or University want so highly valuable a Member, as they well foresaw he must needs prove.

Whilst he was Batchelour, he was appointed *Tripes*, and was much applauded for his witty and inoffensive Speech on that occasion, but this did not take him off from his severe and more useful Studies: For here he plied them hard, and made great use of a good Library belonging to that College; and as soon as he was standing he took his Degree of Master of Arts, but before that he withdrew a while from the University to live at *Wroxhall* in *Warwickshire* with Sir *Roger Burgoin*, Bar. a Person of great Piety, Prudence and Learning, to whom he had been recommended by Dr. *Paman*, one of the Fellows of that College, and afterwards Master of the Faculties at *Lambeth*, under his Grace Dr. *William Sancroft*, Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*; and how well he approv'd himself here, appear'd, not only from Sir *Roger's* kindness to him whilst in his Family, and his unwillingness to part with him, but always by his unusual Respect to him, when he made him Visits, and afterwards especially by his presenting him to a considerable Living.

At his departure thence, whether he retired again for a while to the College, or went immediately from *Wroxhall* to *Nottingham*, I am not certain, but undoubtedly he removed thither soon after. For the Honourable *Francis Pierrepont*, Esq; Brother to the last and great Uncle to the present Marquess of *Dorchester*, wanting a Tutor for his eldest Son Mr. *Robert Pierrepont*, (since divers times Burges in Parliament for the Town of *Nottingham*) and being willing to make an allowance that might invite a Person of Worth and Learning to undertake the Employment, Mr. *Stillingsfleet* was soon pitch'd upon, and prevailed with to accept it.

And here besides his Attendance in his proper Province, the Instruction of the young Gentleman, he found time to set about the writing his *Irenicum*: Which he afterwards professes himself to have published, hoping by it to bring over those to a compliance with the Church of England (then like to be re-established) who stood off upon the supposition that Christ had appointed a Presbyterian Government to be always continued in his Church, and therefore thought Prelacy was to be detested as an unlawful Usurpation; adding moreover, that it did not want success that way both here and in a Neighbour Kingdom.

*Epist. Ded.* before the Ordination Sermon at St. Peter's Cornhil, *March* 15. 1684. and p. 148. of several Conferences between a Popish Priest, a Fanatick Chaplain, &c. Where in the Person of P. D. he speaks freely of it, and says, I believe there are many things in it, which if Dr. *Stillingsfleet* were to write now, he would not have said: For there are some which shew his Youth and want of due Consideration; others which he yielded too far, in hopes of gaining the Dissenting Parties to the Church of England; but upon the whole matter, I am fully satisfied the Book was written with a design to serve the Church of England. Nay, in  
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the aforesaid Preface he says this farther of it, *I dare challenge any Man to produce one Passage in the whole Book that tendeth to encourage Faction or Schism, or Opposition to the Church of England, but on the contrary, I endeavoured to recommend the Episcopal Government, as having the advantage of all others, and coming nearest to Apostolical Practice.* But besides this, it must be acknowledged by all, that it contains a Mass of Learning abundantly beyond what could have been expected at his Years, and which few, if any of his Contemporaries, could pretend to equal; so early did he shew himself to the Admiration of those who herein beheld the Effects both of his Natural Abilities, and his Indefatigable Industry.

This very learned, howsoever misunderstood Treatise, he began, as I said, during his stay at *Nottingham*; but scarce was he allow'd to finish it there, for not above two Years had he been in that station, but he was called back by his worthy Patron, Sir *Roger Burgoin*, who in the Year 1657, upon the Decease of the Reverend and Learned Mr. *Linsford* Rector of *Sutton*, made him a tender of that Rectory, which he thankfully accepted. And one of the Seats of Sir *Roger's* Family being here, might make him the more sollicitous to place a Serious, Ingenious, Pious and Prudent Person there, who might be both a good Neighbour, and Suitable Companion for himself, as well as a Watchful and Skillful Guide of Souls: and of whom could he more fitly make choice upon such an occasion, than of Mr. *Stillingfleet*, whom he had so thoroughly known, and of whose Character and Abilities he was so fully satisfied, by his own Conversation with, and Experience of him at *Wroxhall*; nor would Mr. *Pierrepoint* refuse to part with him upon so advantageous an Invitation.

Here therefore he first took upon him the Charge of a Parish, and which ought not to be forgotten, he did not climb up by the way of those Days of Confusion and Disorder, but enter'd in at the right Door by means of an Episcopal Ordination: For he had well consider'd who they were that our Saviour had commissioned to ordain Labourers for his Vineyard, as he professes of himself (*Pref. to his Ordination-Sermon at St. Peter's*) he even then received Episcopal Orders, and followed the Directions of an excellent Bishop of our Church, the truly Pious and Reverend Dr. *Brownrigg*, the ejected Bishop of *Exon*. For by him it was that Mr. *Stillingfleet* was separated to the Work of the Ministry, to which he thenceforward applied himself. Thus he enter'd upon his Charge at *Sutton*, and here he publish'd the *Irenicum* before-mentioned in the Year 1659, and when he was not above 24 Years of Age, which he also reprinted in 1662, together with an Appendix concerning the Power of Excommunication in a Christian Church, wherein he very succinctly but clearly shews, that the Church is a distinct Society from the State, and has divers Rights and Priviledges of its own, which are derived only from Christ its Head, and particularly that it has a Power of Censuring Offenders, resulting from its Constitution, as a Christian Society, and that these Rights of the Church do not escheat to the Commonwealth, upon their being united in a Christian State.

In this same Year 1662, he published also his *Origines Sacrae*, a Work of great Extent and variety of admirable Learning, and written with such Perspicuity of Expression, such Solidity of Judgment and Strength of Argument, that it would have been deservedly esteemed a most com-  
pleat

pleat Performance for one of more than twice his Age: And so you'll see 'twas thought by a most excellent Judge, for when he appeared at a Visitation before his Diocesan, Bishop *Sanderfon*, the Bishop seeing so young a Man, could hardly believe it was Mr. *Stillingsfleet*, whom as yet he only knew by his Books; and afterwards, when he had embraced him, said, *He much rather expected to have seen one as considerable for his Age, as he had already shewn himself for his Learning*: It having always been justly esteemed one of the best Defences of Revealed Religion that ever was extant in our own or any other Language; and which would but our Modern Deists heartily and impartially apply themselves to study, it might be hoped, that by God's Blessing, they would find it an effectual Antidote for their Scepticism and Infidelity. This shewed the early Ripeness of his Understanding, and that he had attained to the Knowledge of the Aged, when himself was yet but very young, not having finished, perhaps not begun his 28th Year. An excellent Work in its kind! but which would have been still much improved, had God granted him a longer life: A large Specimen whereof is to be seen in the late Folio Edition of it printed at *Cambridge* since his decease, which was to have made part of the First Volume; for he designed to have published it in several Parts in Octavo, and had so well consider'd it, as to have gone on writing and printing as fast as ever Health and Business would have permitted him. For tho' the Subject takes in such a Mass and Compass of Learning, yet had he so prepared and digested it in his Thoughts, that he could soon have writ them down fit for the Publick.

This admirable Treatise made him so known to the World, and got him such esteem amongst the Learned, and particularly with the Right Reverend Father in God, *Humphrey*, then Lord Bishop of *London*, that a Reply coming forth against Archbishop *Laud's* incomparable Answer to *Fisher* the Jesuite, Mr. *Stillingsfleet* was soon pitched upon as a proper Second for so strenuous an Advocate of our Religion. The Author of this Reply wrote himself *T. C.* and the Title of it was *Labyrinthus Cantuariensis*, or, *Dr. Laud's Labyrinth*; and it was said to be printed at *Paris* 1658, but it appeared not abroad till 1663, and the next Year came forth such an Answer to it, evidently manifesting what are the true Grounds of Faith, and where, and on which side the Schism betwixt us and the Church of *Rome* lies, and what Corruptions have been introduced by, and are constantly maintained amongst those of that Communion, as effectually silenced the Adversary, and did not a little advance the Reputation of the Answerer, who though well known, and highly valued before, could not fail of being received with yet a greater respect after so rational a Vindication of our truly Primitive Church and Religion. This he wrote whilst at *Sutton*, and made such a dispatch, that besides constant Attendance on the Duties of the Place, he sent up of that Elaborate Work 6 or 7 Sheets a Week to the Press.

The Fame of these excellent Performances, were the occasion that whilst he continued at his Living he was chosen Preacher at the *Rolls Chappel*, by the Honourable Sir *Harbottle Grimston*, Master of the *Rolls*, which obliged him to be in *London* in Term-time, and was a fair Introduction to his Settlement in that Noble City, which followed within a short time after this.

For Dr. *Lambe* the Rector of *St. Andrew's Holbourn* dying, his kind Friend the Lord Bishop of *London*, and his own celebrated Works together, so recommended him to the Lord Treasurer, the Earl of *Southampton*, to whom the Right of Presentation then belonged (and from whom, by the Marriage of his Daughter the Countess of *Northumberland*; it is since derived to the present Patron his Grace the Duke of *Mountague*) that his Lordship easily pitch'd on him as a Person fit for the Cure of so extensive and populous a Parish; and afterwards he was highly satisfied with his Choice, and soon entertain'd a great value for him; who had much too soon an occasion to shew his high Esteem of his great Patron in a Sermon at his Funeral, wherein he gave him that just Character, which so wise and able, so faithful and conscientious a Statesman justly deserved.

To this he was presented *January, 1667*; instituted the *Easter* following; and here he spent his Time and Pains till 1689, when he was removed to a higher Station. Here, I say, he spent his Time and his Pains, so far as was requisite for the discharge of his Parochial Cure; but not so as to be entirely confin'd to this alone. For besides that, he for some time continued his Labours at the *Rolls*, as he had done formerly: And afterwards he was chosen Lecturer at the *Temple*, where for several Years he preach'd in the Afternoon before those Learned and Venerable Societies. His excellent Discourses in those places, and often at *Serjeants-Inn-Chapel*, brought him into great Acquaintance and general Esteem with the Judges and Gentlemen of Station and Eminence in the Profession of the Law; particularly *Sir Matthew Hale*, when he was Lord Chief Baron, sent to him, and enter'd into an early acquaintance with him, and continued it till his retirement from Publick Affairs. My Lord Chief Justice *Vaughan* too, desired his Friendship, and had a great value for his Conversation; whose Funeral-Sermon he was pitch'd on to preach, and therein gave him a very great and just Character. It might be instanced in more, but it's enough in two such undeniably Eminent Men, and of such great Business as then lay upon them, that they should so much esteem, and so often enjoy his Company. To their and his Honour too, it may now be spoken. He was appointed likewise a Chaplain in ordinary to his Majesty King *Charles II.* and so had an opportunity of Preaching many very Learned and Instructive Sermons at Court, during his Annual Attendance there. He was constituted likewise a Canon-Residentiary of the Cathedral Church of *St. Paul's*, as afterwards of the Metropolitan Church of *Canterbury*.

The Recommendation for the Residentiariaship to the Dean and Chapter of *St. Paul's* is so much in his Praise, that I shall mention some part of it, which runs thus: *Cha. R. Trusty and Wellbeloved, We greet you well. Our well-deserving and well-beloved Subject and Chaplain, Edward Stillingfleet Dr. in Divinity, hath by his Learned Writings done such eminent Service for the Church of England in particular, and the Defence of the Christian Truth in general, that We think our selves bound to give him all fitting Encouragement, and therefore We are graciously pleased to recommend him unto you in very especial manner, and further to will and require that you elect and admit him the said, &c. Given at our Court at Whitehall the 9th of June, 1670.*

And afterwards his Fame continually encreasing, as he had opportunity more and more to shew himself; upon the Removal of the truly

truly Reverend, Learned and Pious Dr. *William Sancroft*, the worthy Dean of that Church, to the Archiepiscopal and Metropolitan See of *Canterbury*, he was promoted to his Deanry, and not long after, upon the Death of Dr. *Pory*, was nominated by his Right Reverend and Honourable Diocesan, the present Lord Bishop of *London*, to the Archdeaconry of *London*. In all which Stations with what Applause he acquitted himself, and how much to the Advantage of those under his Care, is too well known to such as ever lived in Town to need any farther Account of it.

Whilst he was Rector of *Sutton*, he married *Andrea*, the eldest Daughter of *William Dobyms* of *Wormington* in *Gloucester*, Esq; and Sister to the late *William Dobyms*, Esq; a Bencher of *Lincolns-Inn*, who was always in the Bishop's kindness and friendship; and he on all occasions shew'd a great Love and Service for the Bishop and his Family, and who (I must add) for his Learning in the Law, and his Judgment in Pleading, did for many Years make a considerable Figure at the *King's-Bench* and *Chancery-Barr*. She lived not long with him; and by her he had only two Daughters, which both died in their Infancy, and one Son, Dr. *Edward Stillingsfleet* the late Incumbent of *Wood-Norton* in *Norfolk*.

Not many Years after her Death, he married a second Wife, *Elizabeth*, Daughter of Sir *Nicholas Pedley* of *Huntington*, Serjeant at Law; of whose Worth every one that knew her can say a great deal, and all I can mention in this place would be too little. She liv'd with him till near his latter end, and by her he had Seven Children, of which he left only two surviving him; the Reverend Mr. *James Stillingsfleet*, Prebendary of *Worcester* and Rector of *Hartlebury* in the same County and Diocess; and a most virtuously disposed and excellently accomplish'd Daughter, *Anne* the late Wife of *Humphrey Tyske* of *Gray's-Inn*, Esq;.

In the Year 1663, he went out Batchelour of Divinity, and in 1668, he commenced Doctor; and at *Cambridge*, the place of his younger Studies, he was now perswaded to keep the Publick Act; which he did with universal Applause, for his fluency in the Latin Tongue, his quickness of Reply, and his powerful Vindication of the Positions he undertook to maintain, and they were these;

*Ratio 2di Precepti in Decalogo est Immutabilis.*

*Existentia r̄s λόγs ab eterno constat ex initio*

*Evangelii Secundum S. Johannem.*

In the defence of which he fully answered the desire of those who had the largest Expectations of him; though strenuously opposed amongst others of the Heads of the University, more especially by that Eminentely Learned and Acute Disputant, the Regius Professor Dr. *Gunning*, then Master of *St. John's College*, and afterwards successively Lord Bishop of *Chichester* and *Ely*; than whom none was better acquainted with the Ancient Fathers and Writers of the Church, and all sorts of Ecclesiastical Learning: And perhaps never did the Professor more vigorously exert his utmost Force, in the Trial of any Commencer, than in this Case; whereby he only gave the Doctor the better opportunity of shewing his great Abilities, and setting his Performance off to the better advantage.

After

After this he in a little time gave a fresh Testimony of his Usefulness to the Publick. He did not confine his Labours to the Bounds of his single Parish, though a very large one, and which did take up a great deal of his Time, nor those other Stations he was in, but was desirous the rest of the Nation should partake of the excellent Fruits of his Studies; and therefore the following Year 1669, he published some of his Sermons, such as he thought most useful at that time: And because one of them, *concerning the Reason of Christ's Suffering for us* (the last he then published) had met, as he professes, with some opposition from a busie Promoter of the contrary Doctrine: And because unworthy Reflections had been made upon some of the Rulers of the Church, as though they had countenanced and encouraged the *Socinian Doctrine*, he therefore set himself to vindicate the Honour of the Church, and the Truth of the Christian Doctrine in this important Controversie; which he did effectually in a Discourse concerning *the true Reason of the Sufferings of Christ*, in Confutation of *Crellius's* famous Answer to *Grotius*: Wherein he justly exposes the *Socinian* Method of interpreting Scripture, and particularly by a witty Parallel betwixt the first Chapter of *Genesis*, and the first of *St. John's Gospel*. Whence it evidently appears, that the Creation mentioned by *Moses* may with every whit as much Reason, be construed to relate, not to the Production of the World and all things therein, (as it certainly doth) but only to the first beginning of the *Mosaical, Jewish* Dispensation, as the *Socinians* can pretend for applying the Beginning spoken of by *St. John*, to the Beginning of the Evangelical Institution. Here also he seriously considers the Nature and End of our Saviour's Sufferings, and removes the *Socinian* Objections against their Merit, and the Reason we have to expect Salvation by them. He knew very well what intolerable Mischief these vain Pretenders to Reason might do to Religion amongst the Careless and Injudicious, unless some Antidote were given against their Unevangelical and Destructive Doctrines; and hence he seasonably interposed; to detect the Weakness of their Arguments, and convince the World they are not such Masters of Reason as they pretend to. There has been printed since his Death a *Second Part to this Book of Satisfaction*, occasioned by an Appeal from the Dissenting Ministers to him, touching some Differences among themselves about that Point. In it you have several of their Letters and his Answers, and then a fuller Examination of the Grounds of the Controversie (but not quite finished) wherein he judiciously states and explains the Points between them, and as strenuously vindicates that necessary Doctrine of Satisfaction from the Antinomian Notion and Consequences of it, as he had before done from the *Socinian*.

And now a new occasion calls for his Assistance in another kind, his Adversaries of the *Cracovian* strain being thus baffled, a fresh Contest arises from a different Quarter, which he finds it necessary to engage in. He might justly have expected a full and satisfactory Answer from those of the Church of *Rome*, to his forementioned excellent Defence of our Church and Religion; before they had sent him a Challenge of another sort. But this was too difficult a Task for them, and therefore after two superficial Onsets, in the way (to use his own Language, *Pref. to his Discourse of the Idolatry of the Church of Rome*) *that Rats answer Books by gnawing some of the Leaves, whilst it*  
yet



yet retained its full Strength, the Body and main Design of it remaining wholly untouch'd by them; for to lay the former Controversie asleep, he was to be assaulted in another manner. To this purpose two Questions are brought him by a Lady already hastning towards Rome, to which he returned a speedy Answer, though in the midst of many other Employments. And to this he not long after receiv'd a Reply, such as he did not think worth taking notice of, and therefore laid it by as too inconsiderable to divert him from his other more necessary Affairs, till at length his Adversaries began to triumph, as though the Victory were already gained, and he had nothing to say against it. This Usage prevail'd with him to allow these Papers a farther Consideration, and so produced the well-known Discourse of the Idolatry, Phanaticism and Divisions of the Church of Rome, and the hindrances of a good Life, and true Devotion that are amongst them. A heavy Charge indeed! and which if true, were an abundant Caution to all that ever heard it, to be upon their Guard against the Attempts of such, as seek by any sly Insinuations to win them over to so corrupt a Church; and the truth hereof he not only made out in this Treatise, but afterwards supported his Proof of it, in several others, against N. O. J. W. E. W. O. N. and the Author of the *Guide in Controversies*. Mr. Cressy, another of his Opponents, he chose to take little notice of, because of his ill Language, and want of Argument, save that he gives a Taste of his Performance in a short Reflection upon what Account he found given of himself by him, and very pertinently exposes him as one of the unfittest Men in the whole World for writing Ecclesiastical History; since it was not to be expected that he should give a faithful Relation of Things past many Years since, who writes so at random about Matters of our own Times. But yet when a Person of great Honour and Abilities, My Lord Chancellor Clarendon, had vouchsafed to plead his Cause for him, and to undertake his Vindication from the impetuous Assaults of such an enraged Enemy, and Mr. Cressy had hereupon written his *Epistle Apologetical*, the Doctor then held himself obliged in return for so signal a Kindness, to save that Honourable Person the farther trouble of making Animadversions on this Reply. This was the occasion of a particular Consideration of what the Apologist had offered, in a Book entituled, *An Answer to Mr. Cressy's Epistle Apologetical to a Person of Honour, touching his Vindication of Dr. Stillingfleet*. In which he justly exposes the Mystical Divinity as both unintelligible and illusive, and observes the great Affinity there is betwixt the Popish and the Quakers Pretences to an immediate Inspiration, and that such kind of Extasies and Revelations as the Mystical Divinity pretends to, have been condemned by the Christian Church in former Ages, and so is no part of the Christian Doctrine.

But his chief Strength was reserved for Dr. Godden, who had undertaken to clear his Communion from the heavy Charge of Idolatry. In the general Preface before his *Answer to several Treatises, &c.* he takes care to remove one Objection urged by the Dr. against himself, and his manner of proceeding in this Debate, which was, that he *dis-sented from the Church of England in accusing the Church of Rome of Idolatry*. Which Pretence he here refutes from the Doctrine of the Homilies from K. Edward the VIth's Liturgy and Injunctions, from Archbishop Cranmer's *Articles of Visitation*, the Injunctions of Queen

*Elizabeth*, and a *Form of Thanksgiving* in the 37th Year of her Reign, as well as from Archbishop *Whitgift*, Archbishop *Bancroft*, Bishop *Montague* and others. Of this Dr. he professes he had shewn more Art and Cunning than all the rest put together, and had said as much in defence of their Cause, as Wit and Subtilty could invent. (Epist. Ded.) And his Answer to him was reserved for the last place, and was so compleat and perfect, as to put an End to their Dispute for that time. It consists of two Parts: In the former of which he apply'd himself to give a particular Account of the Nature of Idolatry, and the several Species of it, that were to be observed in the several Parts of the World, whereby to detect *T. G's* false Notion of it, and to give a true one instead thereof. In the other Part, he gives so clear an Account of the Worship used in the *Roman Church*, as evidently discovers it to be grossly Idolatrous in divers respects. A Work of diligent Reading as well as profound Judgment, and sprightliness of Thought; and in a word, truly worthy of so great and famous an Author, and which gives the Adversaries such a deadly Stroke, as was not to be recover'd. Nothing is more plain to those who are well acquainted with the Religion of the *Romanists*; than that they are guilty of very heinous Idolatry, in their worship of the Host, of Saints, Reliques and Images, more especially of the Cross. And this is so manifestly made out in this Treatise, that there is now no longer any room left to doubt of it.

And now it might have been thought reasonable for him to retire to his other Studies, having obtained so compleat a Conquest over the rest of his Opponents, and this last the principal of them. But his Adversaries forwardness, and his own great Zeal for the Cause he had undertaken, would not suffer him to rest here. For another Book of *T. G's*. by way of Dialogue, taking divers Exceptions at the foresaid Answer, put him upon a new Vindication, by way of Dialogue likewise, consisting of several Conferences between a *Romish Priest*, a *Fanatick Chaplain*, and a *Divine of the Church of England*, concerning several Points both of Doctrine and Practice, chiefly relating to the Sin of Idolatry; and more especially these four, *The Idolatry of the Church of Rome*, and *the Consequences of the Charge of Idolatry*; *the Nature of Idolatry*, and a *Parallel between the Heathen and Romish Idolatry*. In this Discourse he fully answer'd the groundless Cavils of *Dr. Godden*, both against our Church and himself, and set the whole Controversie in dispute in so clear a light, as to take away the Force of that Doctor's Pretences, and at the same time to manifest the Weakness of another Party, who against all Sense and Reason, are continually clamouring against, and defaming the Church of *England*, as Popish and grossly Superstitious, if not as hainously Idolatrous: Though every one that does not wilfully shut his own Eyes, must needs see, that none are more rationally averse from, or more happily have detected the intolerable Corruptions of the *Romish Church*, and born their Testimony against them more heartily in all Dangers, than the Prelates and others of the Church of *England* have continually done.

I should have noted before, That when the Learned *Dr. Tillotson*, then Preacher to the Honourable Society of *Lincolns Inn*, and late Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*, published his most ingenuous and delightful, and yet truly rational and argumentative *Rule of Faith*, wherein in an extraordinary manner, he has shew'd a wonderful mixture

ture of Wit and Judgment, a great strength of Argument, cloathed in a very diverting Dress, in answer to Mr. *Seijeant's* Discourse entituled *Sure-Footing in Christianity*, his good Friend, Mr. *Stillingsfleet*, thought fit to annex a suitable Appendix to it, by way of Reply to *J. S's* 3d. *Appendix concerning some Animadversions on his Rational Account*, &c. Two Pages of which this great Pretender to Demonstration had undertaken to examine: But for this he was worthily chastised and closely pursu'd from Argument to Argument, and his new way of resolving the Ground of Faith into Oral Tradition prov'd to a Demonstration to be most unreasonable, and that it runs Men upon inextricable Difficulties, and at last affords them a fair Pretence for Infidelity.

Here also in a short Postscript another Treatise called *Diaphanta*, and said to be written by the Author of *Fiat Lux*, is examined and so handled in a few Pages, as fully to shew its Weakness and Impertinence, and so totally to silence it, that I believe few People have since so much as heard the Name of it.

Here I must not omit another very valuable Treatise, or rather a Collection of divers Treatises, which though not of his own composing, we are however obliged to him for publishing, and for his Preface set before them, which deserves to be written in Letters of Gold. They bear the Title of *the Jesuits Loyalty manifested in three several Treatises, lately written by them against the Oath of Allegiance*: And from their own Arguments, and the Authority of many other of their own celebrated Writers, he proves the Government can have no real Security from them, so long as they refuse to renounce the Pope's Power of deposing Princes, and absolving Subjects from their Allegiance. This is the Use he makes of the three first Treatises as well as his Citations out of other Authors of the *Romish* Communion. But now besides these, he has subjoyned three other Tracts of a different Nature, but yet allied to them in this, that they tend to shew how unreasonable it is for this Order of Men to expect the Favour of any Civil Government, and of our own in particular. The first is entituled, *The Execution of Justice in England, not for Religion but for Treason*; bearing Date *December* the 17th. 1583, and was penn'd by the direction of that great and wise Statesman the Lord Treasurer *Burleigh*. The next is called *Important Considerations*, and they are declared to be such as ought to move all true and sound Catholicks who are not wholly Jesuited, to acknowledge without all Equivocations, Ambiguities or Shiftings, that the Proceedings of her Majesty and the State with them, since the Beginning of her Highness's Reign, have been both mild and merciful. The third is stil'd *The Jesuits Reasons unreasonable*, printed 1662, and the design of its Re-publication was to let us see how unsincere and undutiful the Behaviour of that Order has been to former Princes, and how little Trust can be given to their most confident Professions of Loyalty; there being no appearance of any Amendment in them: Thus both by his own, and by publishing others Writings, he has taken all just Occasion to vindicate our Government as well as our Religion from those avowed Enemies to both, and to make it visible to all indifferent Readers, that as no trust is in any Case to be put in them of the Roman Communion by Princes that are not perfectly under their Direction; so neither have they just cause to complain of any Proceedings that have been against them, either in this or any other Nation.

He was long engaged, from Time to Time, in this sort of Controversie, and with divers Antagonists, and with what admirable temper he received the most outrageous Insults of his Adversaries, and with what clearness and strength of Reason he maintained his Ground against them all, the Reader may please to inform himself from a great Master of Eloquence, an accurate Judge of Writings, no less than of Persons, his forementioned Right Honourable Defender, the Lord Chancellour *Clarendon*; who in his Polite and Judicious Animadversions on Mr. *Cressy's* Book, entituled, *Fanaticism Fanatically imputed to the Catholick Church by Dr. Stillingfleet*, p. 18. gives this Commendation of the Doctor and his manner of Writing. *Though I am no stranger to the Writings of Dr. Stillingfleet, but have read, I think, all that he hath published, at least all that I have seen of his, and as I always admired the Strength and Vigour of his Ratiocination, and the Clearness of his Style and Expressions (a Faculty not natural to all very Learned and Pious Men) by which he renders the most difficult Points, and which are usually by others wrapt up in obscure Terms, plain and intelligible to Vulgar Understandings; so I have been exceedingly delighted with the Softness, Gentleness and Civility of his Language, (which can never flow from an Insolent or Proud Spirit) in which he represents things which in themselves are light, and such as might be neglected, in a pleasant, not reproachful manner, a Dialect his Adversaries are not acquainted with; and when he is compelled to answer Arguments, or rather Allegations full of Bitterness and Reproachful Words, which would tempt another to take the Advantage they are liable to, with some Sharpness, he passes by the Provocation, and collects what can possibly be found like Reason, out of what is alledg'd, and refutes it with very much less Severity than the Matter would justifie, and seems sometimes to require.* Thus speaks the Noble Author, and how much more Prudent must it be, how much more for the Honour of the Controvertist, how much more Christian, how much more to the Service of the Cause to be maintained, when its Advocate thus strictly keeps himself to his proper Business, and observes such due Decorum in the Management of it, than when unnecessary Heats and Animosities interpose themselves, and unhappily divert the Writers from their intended Design, to vent their Passion, as it is too frequently seen, in exposing and bespattering each other?

To such excellent Purpose had this invincible Champion of the Church of *England* been employed for divers Years together, in defending our Church and Religion, from their restless Enemies of the *Roman* Communion, who though they rose up plentifully against him, as a common Adversary, and whose indefatigable Diligence, and intimate Acquaintance with their own Writers, and the Doctrines, Canons and Usages of their Church, and the Arguments that have been urged in their behalf, as well as with the Ancient Christian Fathers, and all sorts of other Authors, had deservedly rendred him very formidable to them, and made it necessary for them to exert their utmost Force, yet did they find his single Pen to be more than an equal Match for their great Numbers. His Cause being infinitely more defensible than theirs, and his Strength and Skill in maintaining it having raised him far above the Level of the very best of those who appeared against him, he could not fail of getting the Advantage over them. Which he did by such Substantial Proofs, and Demonstration of the Unsoundness of their Quotations, Precariousness of their Assertions, and  
other

other unfair Dealings in the Management of all their Disputes, that he might now very well leave this sort of Drudgery, and betake himself to his other more agreeable Studies.

And so he had begun to do, but could not be long at rest, for behold a third sort of Adversaries presently attack him with all their might. For being appointed by his Right Reverend and Honourable Diocesan to preach at *Guild-hall Chappel*, before the Lord Mayor, the Aldermen, Judges and Serjeants the first Day of *Easter Term*, 1680, he chose to insilt upon those words of *St. Paul. Phil. 3. 16. Nevertheless whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same Rule, let us mind the same Things.* The Occasion of this Discourse himself tells us, (*Pref. to the Unreasonableness of Separation, p. xxxvi, &c.*) was this. The Dissenters growing loud in their groundless Clamours against the Church of *England*, as Popishly affected, and one of the Principal Leaders of them (*Mr. Baxter*) having published two pernicious Books, the one called, *A Plea for Peace*, but which, as he justly observes, far better deserv'd the Title of *a Plea for Disorder and Separation*; the other, *The true and only way of Concord of all Christian Churches*, but fraught with such impracticable Notions, and dividing Principles, as though his whole Design had been to prove, that there is no true way of Concord among Christians: *When I look'd into these Books*, says he, *and saw the Design of them, I was mightily concerned, and infinitely surpris'd, that a Person of his Reputation for Piety, of his Age and Experience in the World, and such a Lover of Peace, as he had always professed himself, and one who tells the World so often of his Dying and the Day of Judgment, should think of leaving two such Firebrands behind him, which have been since followed by four or five more to the same purpose, so that he seems resolv'd to leave his Life and Sting together, in the Wounds of this Church, when even those who pretend to plead for Peace, and to bring Water to quench her Flames do but add more Fuel to them.* This gave the first occasion to these Thoughts, which I afterwards delivered in my Sermon; for since by the means of such Books, the Zeal of so many People was turned off from the Papijts against our Church, I saw a plain necessity, that either we must be run down by the impetuous Violence of an enraged, but unprovoked Company of Men, or we must venture our selves to try whether we could stem that Tide, which we saw coming upon us, and it falling to my Lot, to preach in the most publick Auditory of the City, at a more than usual Appearance, being the first Sunday in the Term, I considered the Relation I stood in under our Honoured Diocesan, to the Clergy of the City, and therefore thought my self more obliged to take notice of what concern'd the Peace and Welfare of the Churches therein. Upon these Considerations I thought fit to take that Opportunity to lay open the due Sense I had of the Unreasonableness and Mischief of the present Separation. He thought it neither improper nor unseasonable to perswade Protestants to Peace and Unity, at any time, especially at such a time as this, when Things were in such a dangerous Fermentation: And the whole Drift of his Sermon was to dissuade the Dissenters (from the Establish'd Church) to quit their needless and destructive Separation, shewing, that according to the Judgment of divers even amongst themselves, a Conformity to our Church's Worship was not unlawful, and by consequence their Separation must be sinful and dangerous, and what they ought therefore all to desist from, as they would consult the Honour of God, and Religion, the Peace and Tranquillity of the

Church, and would prevent the great Designs of our other Enemies, and leave the Protestant Religion Established here to Posterity. All which Considerations loudly called upon them, to follow the Apostle's Advice, *in walking by the same Rule, and in minding the same Things.* This Sermon he entituled, *The Mischief of Separation*, and printed it at the Request of the *Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen*, together with some Additions which the Straits of Time would not permit him to deliver from the Pulpit. In all which, he declares himself so far from intending ill to any one, that his only Design was to find out a Foundation for a lasting Union among our selves. (*Epist. Dedicat. to the Lord Mayor*) which, as he proceeds, is impossible to be attained, till Men are convinced of the Evil and Danger of the present *Separation*; it being carried on by such Principles as would not only overthrow the present Constitution of our Church, but any other whatsoever. Yet this kind and seasonable Admonition, though delivered with all the Gravity and Seriousness, Affection and Earnestness, and all the perswasive Eloquence that so important a Subject required, and was usual with him in his Preaching, had not its wish'd Effect, but was too coolly receiv'd by some, and violently exclaim'd against by others; who being unwilling to return to the Church they had forsaken, and from whose Communion they absented themselves, rather made it their Business to promote and perpetuate our unhappy Divisions. Which made him complain in his Preface to the *Unreasonableness of Separation*, (p. 11.) of the ill Usage he had met with, and to assure the World, that however it had been maliciously suggested by some, and too easily believed by others, that he was put upon the Work with a Design to enflame our Differences, and to raise a Persecution against Dissenting Protestants, he was so far from any thought tending that way, that the only Motive he had to undertake it was his just Apprehension, that the Destruction of the Church, under a Pretence of Zeal against Popery, was one of the most likely ways to bring it in. However several of the Dissenters, and especially those three of principal Note amongst their Leaders; Dr. Owen, Mr. Baxter and Mr. Alsop, instead of a thankful Acknowledgment for his intended Kindness, set themselves to write against him, and some of them in a very indecent manner. Which unsuitable Return of theirs had only this Effect, that it produced an admirable Vindication of our Church, and its Communion, entituled, *The Unreasonableness of Separation*. Wherein is more largely shewn, the Weakness and Invalidity of all the Objections that are brought by the Dissenters in behalf of their Division from, and Opposition to the Church of *England*. A lasting Vindication, and which it was to be hoped would give Satisfaction as to Communion with our Church, not only to those who lived when it was written, or are yet alive, but even to late Posterity.

Near about this time that this Dispute began, a Contest happening in the House of Lords, concerning the Bishops Right of Voting in Capital Cases, and one of that Illustrious House (the Lord H.) having written *ex professo*, against the Bishops Right, our most Learned Dean (for so he had been for some time) published an Anonymous Answer to his Lordship, which much surpriz'd the World upon a double account; for first, it was not expected that a Divine, and one who besides the Business of a great Parish, had been long engaged in Controversies

troverfies of Divinity, and had his Time thereby taken up in Writing many excellent Books in his own Profefſion, ſhould have been ſo perfectly well verſ'd in the Ancient Conſtitution and Uſages of Parliament, as well as the Common and Statute-Laws of the Land, as he here ſhewed himſelf to be. As neither in the ſecond place, was it to be thought, he could have ſo dextrouſly changed his Style, which is naturally much larger and more copious, into one ſo concise, and yet withall ſo Subſtantial and Argumentative as this was written in. Nor was it eaſie to give two more remarkable Inſtances of an incomparable Genius, or which ſhould ſhew how readily he could vary his manner of Expreſſion as Occaſion ſhould ſerve, and how clear an Inſight he had into ſuch Parts of Learning, as ſeem'd to lye moſt out of his way.

Nor muſt I forbear to obſerve, that ſome few Years before this, whiſt he was ſo deeply engaged in his Diſputes with the Writers of the *Roman Church*, the *Deiſts*, who have ſince made ſo ſhameful a Progreſs in bidding the moſt confident though ſenſeleſs Deſiance to Religion, beginning then to ſhew themſelves, he puts forth, *A. D.* 1677, an Anonymouſ Treatiſe for their Conviction, called, *A Letter to a Deiſt*; written, as himſelf profeſſes, for the Satisfaction of a Particular Perſon, who owned the Being and Providence of God, but expreſſed a mean Eſteem of the Scriptures, and the Chriſtian Religion. Yet it was not this ſingle Perſon's Conviction alone that put him upon this uſeful Work, but the growing Infidelity of the Age, which he found beginning to call aloud for an Effectual Remedy: *Which*, ſays he in the following words, *is become ſo common a Theme among the Scepticks of this Age, that the Author of the Diſcourſe thought it worth his Time and Care, to conſider the Force of the Objections that were made againſt them, i. e. the Holy Scriptures.* For ſilencing of which he moſt convincingly proves the Truth of the Matters of Fact related in the *New Teſtament*, ſhews there is no ground of Suſpicion concerning them, and that no Facts in the World were ever better attested than theſe, and that they had abundant Evidence, not only Humane but Divine, as alſo that there cannot be a plainer proof of the *Old Teſtament* than by the *New*, inasmuch as if the *New Teſtament* be true, the *Old* muſt unqueſtionably be ſo too, as being moſt plainly and undeniably confirmed by it. Our Bleſſed Saviour and his Apoſtles appealing to *Mofes* and the Prophets on all occaſions, and having moreover left it on Record, that Holy Men of Old did ſpeak as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt. And in the Conclusion he answers ſuch Objections as were offered to the contrary, with the ſame Spirit, the ſame Judgment and Exactneſs, which is ſo peculiarly obſervable in his other Writings.

And now to give the Reader a Specimen of his thorough Inſight into another ſort of Learning, it will be fit to inſtance in his Elaborate and Judicious *Origines Britannicæ*. Wherein by comparing the Writings of our moſt famous Hiſtorians, he rectifies their Miſtakes with ſuch Accuracy and ſuch Evidence, makes ſuch clear diſtinction betwixt their Genuine and Spurious Writings, their Faithful and Fabulous Accounts, and thereby ſets their Story in ſuch a Light, as to ſhew himſelf a perfect Maſter, not only of Divinity and Law, but of the nicest Points of Hiſtory. The Deſign he propoſ'd to himſelf herein was to give as clear and diſtinct a View of the State and Condition of the

*British*

*British Churches*, from their first Plantation to the Conversion of the *Saxons*, as could be had at so great a distance, and by such a degree of Light as is left us concerning them, and to rescue this part of Church-History, of so much Concernment to us of this Church and Nation, from those Fabulous Antiquities, which had so miserably obscur'd the Truth of it.

And no sooner did this Excellent Book appear, but it shew'd it self to be a most accomplish'd Work, the Off-spring of great Care and Industry, in perusing multitudes of Authors, whether Printed or in MSS. of great application of Thought, in a diligent comparing one thing with another, and of great Knowledge and profound Judgment, in separating the Chaff from the Wheat, discarding what is Spurious, correcting what is Erroneous, and retaining and establishing what is genuine, authentick and well-grounded. In the Preface he applies himself to defend the accurately Learned, the Lord Bishop of *St. Asaph's* (now of *Worcester's*) Historical Account of the Ancient Church-Government in *Great Britain and Ireland*, and to convince us, that no sort of Learning came amiss to him, he shew'd himself perfectly well read both in the *Irish* and *Scottish* Historians, both Ancient and of latter Times, and that he thoroughly understood what Credit was to be given to either of them, which were to be depended upon, and which not. He begins the Book it self with observing a general Mistake founded upon a Passage of *Gildas* ordinarily misunderstood, and shews from hence how highly improbable it is, that *Joseph of Arimathea* should have planted Christianity in this Island in the time of *Tiberius Caesar*, and that it was much rather brought hither by *St. Paul* some Years after. Where it thenceforward continued, as *Tertullian* and *Origen* testify, for their Time, and others after them from Time to Time.

Here likewise in answer to *Emanuel a Schelstraet*, he most strenuously and judiciously asserts the Rights of the *British Churches* against the Encroachments of the Bishops of *Rome*, whom he shews at the time of the Council of *Nice*, to have had no Jurisdiction beyond the Suburbicary Churches, which were so far from including the *Western Churches*, and ours amongst the rest, that they did not comprehend the Provinces of *Italy*, properly so called. He observes likewise how Learning was propagated here, and what was the Ancient Service of the *British Churches*, and that when *Gregory the Great* sent *Augustin* the Monk to settle the *British Churches*, he did not yet oblige them to observe the Rules of that of *Rome*. And after a Comparison of the *Roman* and other Offices, he draws this Conclusion in relation to our own Church, for ever silencing an Objection raised, and sometimes loudly insisted upon against it; where it doth appear, that our Church of *England* hath omitted none of those Offices wherein the Ancient Churches agreed; and that where the *British*, or *Gallican* and *Roman* differed, our Church hath not followed the *Roman*, but the other; and therefore our Dissenters do unreasonably charge us with taking our Offices from the Church of *Rome*. And at length he ends with a Relation of *St. Augustin's* coming hither, and inducing the *British Monks* and others to come over to him, which manifestly proves them to have owned no dependency upon the Church or Pope of *Rome*.



This gives me occasion to mention another Historical Tract, which though not published till after his Death, may not be unfitly taken notice of in this Place, by reason of its Affinity with the foregoing, and that is his Discourse of *the True Antiquity of London, and its State in the Roman Times*. Which he shews to have been first built by the *Romans*; as also what State it was in during their stay here; and again, that *St. Paul's Church* was no Temple of *Diana*, as *Mr. Camden* apprehends it to have been. But it was from the first a Cathedral Church erected by King *Ethelbert*. When he likewise takes occasion to discourse of Cathedral Churches, and most admirably and learnedly shews the Usefulness of them in respect to the Bishop, (whose Council the Dean and Prebendaries are) for the greater Solemnity of Divine Worship, and in order to the further Propagation of Religion. A Treatise that is of no great Length, but of much Reading and exquisite Judgment, and wherein are interspersed an unusual Variety of excellent, ingenious and useful, critical, etymological and topographical Observations, worthy of so celebrated an Author; and which the Curious Reader will find to be very diverting as well as instructing, and in both respects highly deserving his diligent Perusal.

But to return, I must observe, that about the Time this learned and useful Work was published, a new unhappy Scene opened it self. Popery began to threaten the Nation, and by the Influence of the Court, and the Encouragement it received from thence, to grow very open and high; and thereby called upon all such as had any concern for our Church, and the Preservation of the true Reformed Religion among us, to exert their utmost Force in its behalf, as the only apparent Means under God, of securing so inestimable a Blessing to our Selves and our Posterity. At this Season a highly commendable Zeal shewed it self all over the Nation, such as had been thought to have little or no regard for Religion, now began to be awakened and to shew their Aversion to that Superstition and Idolatry they feared likely to break in upon us. But more especially the Clergy generally shew'd that they thought themselves oblig'd to fortifie both themselves and their Parishioners with the best Arguments they were able. But above all, the *London Clergy* were justly honoured, and had a singular Reverence paid them for their Courage and Diligence in this remarkable Exigence, and their many Learned and Seasonable Vindications of the Reformed Religion established in our Church. As they had not long before published divers admirable short Discourses upon the several Points in Dispute betwixt us and our Dissenting Brethren: so now apprehending themselves in danger, from another Quarter, they made it their Business to guard themselves and their Neighbours against whatsoever Attempts might be made upon them from thence: They preach'd and disputed against Popery, and pray'd against a return of it, and they were much esteem'd and reverenc'd for their many Learned and Judicious Writings, discovering the false Doctrines, and corrupt Practices of the *Romish Church*; such as in a little time effectually baffled their acutest Adversaries, and which will remain a lasting Confutation of all the strenuous Endeavours of its Apologists for its Re-establishment among us.

And we may be sure the most worthy Dean of *St. Paul's* would not be backward to give his Assistance to so good and seasonable a Work. Indeed he most readily and frequently enter'd the Lists in Defence

of that Church, of which he often had formerly shewn himself so successful a Champion. And besides his own Labours, he encouraged and advised his Brethren of the *London* Clergy in theirs, for this necessary Work. He had the greater Influence by his general Conversation with, and Kindness for them; and as Dean of *St. Paul's*, he had many Livings in the City, which were very worthily bestowed. Those great Patrons of the Church too, the Lord Chancellour *Nottingham*, and the present Lord Bishop of *London*, who had greater Opportunities, were pleas'd to joyn with him in the Resolution of filling all Livings within their Power, with the ablest and fittest Incumbents.

Upon the much lamented Death of King *Charles* the Second, a Death that was then apprehended to threaten great Calamities to the Church of *England*, and was soon found by sad Experience to have been of dreadful Consequence to it: Upon the Death of this King, two Papers in behalf of the *Romish* Faith and Church, being found in his Majesty's Strong Box, said to be written in his own Hand, and being presently made publick, together with another written by the late Dutchess of *York*; and a great Noise being made about them, and great use made of them, in order to the gaining Profelytes to the Church of *Rome*, it was necessary some Care should be taken to detect the Invalidity and Weakness of them. This therefore the Reverend Dean undertook and performed with all Decency and due Respect to the August Names they bare, and yet with his wonted strength of Argument, and all that force of Reason which was requisite for setting them in a true light, and preventing the ill Effects that might otherwise have been feared from them: This he did in a particular Answer to each of them, and again in a Vindication, by way of Reply to the defence of them. His Answer was Paragraph by Paragraph; and so he left no part of them without a due Consideration; and in treating of the first of them, he proves, not only that the *Roman* Church is not the one only Catholick Church of Christ, but that they themselves do not in truth believe it to be so. His Proof is short, though very cogent, and I shall therefore take the Liberty here to recite it in his own Words, p. 3. *It is agreed among all Christians, that Christ can have but one Church upon Earth, as there is but one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism; and this is the Church we profess to believe in these two Creeds. But if those, who made those Creeds for our Direction, had intended the Roman Catholick Church, why was it not so express'd? How came it to pass that such a Limitation of the Sense of Christ's Catholick Church to the Roman should never be put to Persons to be baptized in any Age of the Church? For I do not find in the Office of Baptism, even in the Roman Church, that it is required that they believe the Roman Catholick Church, or that they deny the Validity of Baptism out of the Communion of the Roman Church. From whence it is to me as visible, as that the Scripture is in Print, that the Church of Rome it self doth not believe that it is the one Catholick Church mentioned in the two Creeds. For then it must void all Baptism out of its Communion, which it hath never yet done. He proceeds, that as long as Baptism doth enter Persons into the Catholick Church, it is impossible, that all who have the true firm of Baptism, though out of the Communion of the Roman Church, should be Members of the Catholick Church, and yet the Communion of the Roman and Catholick be all one, as it must be if the Roman Church, be the Catholick and Apostolick Church*  
*professed*

*professed in the Creeds.* His whole Discourse is answerable to this; but however I thought it not amiss to recite this because it is so brief, and yet so full a Reply to the *Romanists* chief Pretence, which they argue upon all occasions, and with all the Assurance that may be, though in truth without any ground for it, either in Scripture, Antiquity or Reason.

Near about the same time with these Papers appear'd an Artful Piece, and subtilly enough accommodated to the Capacity of the Populace, and all such who did not well understand the several Points in debate betwixt the Church of *England*, and the Church of *Rome*, entituled, *A Papist Mis-represented and Represented*, written in two Columes, the one pretending to give an account of the *Romish* Religion in such Terms as Protestants are wont to describe it in, but more gross than any Protestant of tolerable Understanding would venture to use in it. The other containing such a Representation as they upon occasion are wont to give of themselves, and their Worship and Doctrines, though different enough in many Particulars from what their Councils and Catechism; their Publick Offices of Devotion, their most celebrated Writers, and their known Practises testify of them. This Book, thus mischievously contriv'd, needed therefore so much the more accurate Answer, whereby to set in a true light both these distorted and unequal Characters. This therefore our great Dean took under his Consideration, and fully expos'd its Sophistry, by giving an exact State of the Difference between us and the *Romanists*, and shewing, that when all the fairest Allowances that can be, are made, there yet remain several insuperable Difficulties which render our Union with them impossible, whilst they insist upon their present Demands. A Reply truly worthy of its Author, and which, though it could not silence its clamorous and overforward Adversaries, yet gave a great Blow to their Cause; there being no more effectual way to arm People against the Insinuations of Popery, than a full, clear, and authentick Representation both of its Principles and Practices: Which whosoever thoroughly understands, must be either wilfully blind, or at least grossly prejudiced, if he does not discover an irreconcilable Difference between those, and the Doctrines and Precepts of the Holy Scriptures.

Soon after this former Tract came forth a *Dialogue between a New Catholick Convert, and a Protestant, concerning the Doctrines of the Trinity and Transubstantiation.* For so bent were the *Romanists* upon pursuing their own Interest by all Methods whatsoever, that they would choose rather (as they have too frequently done since) to undermine the Trinity and other fundamental Doctrines of Christianity, than yield themselves baffled, when all unbiass'd Readers could not but see, they were so to a great degree. But this Wicked and Antichristian Pamphlet, was in a little time worthily chastised by this great Man, in a new *Dialogue between a Protestant and a Papist*, consisting of two Parts, the former of which being levell'd against their unaccountable Doctrine of Transubstantiation, is chiefly spent in shewing that this late Article of the *Romish* Faith is contrary to the constant Belief of the Ancient Church, not one of whose Members ever taught it for many Ages together: As is here fully proved in Contradiction to the vain Pretences of the Authors of *Consensus Veterum*, and *Nubes Testium*. In the other it is clearly made out, that though our Saviour's words, *This is*  
*my*

*my Body*, were spoken figuratively, yet what is said of our Lord's Divinity, is not to be so understood, but in the plain and literal Sense of the Words, because otherwise Divine Worship could not be due to him, as both Protestants and Papists own that the Scripture expressly teaches it to be. Here also our Saviour's Divinity is proved, by brief but solid and substantial Arguments; as is likewise the Trinity in Unity. And on the other hand, the Article of Transubstantiation is evidenced to be not only unscriptural but grossly and shamefully unreasonable and full of Contradictions, and by consequence, that there is no manner of ground for a Parallel between these two Doctrines; the one being a truly Catholick Apostolick Verity, and a necessary Article of Faith, and as such plainly taught in Scripture, the other a late Novel Invention, and which is neither to be supported by Scripture nor Reason.

Here one would have thought this great Champion for the Faith, had very competently perform'd his part in its defence: But now behold a new Encounter. That he might be sure not to want an Opportunity of exercising both his Learning and his Patience, he is engaged in another manner. For he is presently called to a Verbal Conference, concerning *the Infallibility of the Church of Rome in following the universal Testimony of all Traditionary Christians*; for the Satisfaction of Mr. T. solicited to go over to the Roman Communion, who (as Mr. M. affirm'd) had already promis'd to do it, unless Dr. Stillingfleet was able to shew, that Protestants have a ground of absolute Certainty for their Faith. And as we may easily believe he would not, so he did not decline so fair an occasion of shewing how sadly weak and precarious their Faith is, who found it only upon the certainty of *Oral Tradition*. His Adversary's Argument was, *That all Traditionary Christians, that is, all Bishops, all Priests, all Fathers, and all People following this Rule (namely of Oral Tradition) and receiving Faith because it was received the day before, could not innovate in Faith, unless they could all either forget what they receiv'd the day before, or out of Malice change it; therefore because no Cause can be assigned of such an Effect, they cannot innovate.* Which Plea he abundantly confuted by a manifest Instance of the contrary, which his Adversary could not know how to get over, namely, of the *Greek Church*, which followed Tradition from Father to Son; and yet, says the Dean, *you charge it with Errors in Matters of Faith; so that a Church following Tradition may err in Matters of Faith.* He has himself given us a short Account of this Dispute, whereby it appears, not only that he confirmed the Gentleman for whose sake it was undertaken, but also so fully answered all the Pretences of Mr. G. that Modesty and Prudence ought to have directed him, for his own sake, to have forborn his vain Boasts of his Performance upon this Occasion. And when upon Mr. G's disappearing Mr. M. began to espouse his Cause, he soon met with so just a Reproof that put an end to his Attempts, and this Controversie together.

Till at length J. S. thought fit to step forth with his *Catholick Letters*, declaring in a very peculiar manner, that he had accepted a Commission from Mr. G. to hold his Cards, whilst he was not in Circumstances to play out his Game himself. One would think a Man that makes no more of the weightiest Matters of Faith and Salvation, than as it were a Game at Cards, should not be like to say much to the purpose.

pose. And to shew that he did not, the Learned Dean in a Treatise, styl'd, *A Discourse concerning the Nature and Grounds of the Certainty of Faith*, sufficiently exposes his confident way of Writing, and shews the Weakness of his Arguments, and the Falsty of his Assertions, together with his egregious Insincerity, in publishing here for Truth, what he durst not undertake to maintain as such at *Rome* and *Doway*; but on the contrary profess'd it to be destructive of Faith, and Heretical, and that he never had taught any such Doctrine, nor was it possible he should. Thus as to *J. S.* himself: But besides this, he proves against his Objections to the contrary, that Protestants have solid ground of certainty of their Faith, and that all *J. S.*'s Arguments hold as evidently against the certainty of Arithmetick, as of the Scriptures: inasmuch as if the one be liable to be misinterpreted by those who do not duly attend to its Doctrine, so is the other to be misapply'd by those who do not rightly attend to its Directions. The truth is, they both oftentimes are wronged in the Application, but this does not prove either of them to be uncertain in its self, or not a sure Rule to those who use it aright. And beyond this, he observes farther, that *Mr. S.*'s Method would overthrow the possibility of any Rule of Faith whatsoever; and for this plain Reason, because none can be assign'd, which it is not possible for Men to misapprehend and to mistake about. As likewise that *J. S.*'s certain Authority of Tradition is not only liable to the like Abuse, but is moreover built upon a very uncertain and sandy Foundation.

In this Discourse, p. 23. he professes a design of proving, that no Catholick Tradition can be produced against us, in any one Point of the Additional Creed of Pope *Pius* the IVth. of which he would suddenly publish the first Part. And again in the Conclusion, having fully confuted *J. S.*'s pretended Demonstration of the Infallibility of *Oral* and *Practical Tradition*, and having thereupon occasion to mention the Council of *Trent*, and its Pretences to a constant uninterrupted Tradition for its new Articles of Faith, he refers himself, for Answer to those Pretences, to what he was designing to publish particularly in relation to that Council. It is great pity he never finish'd what he thus intended. But the first part of it was soon made publick under this Title, *The Council of Trent examined and disproved by Catholick Tradition, &c.* And he makes it very plain in relation to several of the Points determined by that Council, particularly as to *Unwritten Traditions, the Canon of Scripture, the free use of the Scriptures in Vulgar Language, the Merit of Good Works, the Number of Sacraments, and Auricular Confession*, not only that they had no Universal Tradition for their Doctrine and Practice, in relation to each of these, but also by what Steps and Degrees, and upon what Occasions their Corruptions herein were brought in amongst them. And had he gone on as he first propos'd, to take its remaining Decisions to task, and given the same account of them likewise, it might perhaps have given the *Romanists* a greater Blow, than most other Books that have been written against them.

Here he was in his own Sphere, and wrote as a most Learned and Judicious Divine, and a true Son of, and Advocate for the excellent Church in which he bore so great a Character. But I have already observed, that he did not confine himself to these Studies, in which he had done such eminent Service in many respects, but when he saw it necessary, would turn himself to other very different Subjects, but

always with admirable Success, and such Accuracy in each Performance, as if he had chiefly, if not solely, apply'd himself to that sort of Learning. Some highly valuable Instances of this I have already mentioned, and must now take notice of some others.

In the Second Part of his *Ecclesiastical Cases* are two Discourses, the two first in order, of which the one had never been published before, the other was only Reprinted with some Enlargements, having been first set forth in the Year MDCLXXXIX.

In the former of these, he strenuously vindicates the Ecclesiastical Laws of our Land, shews, that the Bishops in issuing Procces out in their own Names, do no more encroach upon the Prerogatives of the Crown, than all Lords of Mannors do in holding Courts in their Names, nor any more than they are warranted to do by Law. He observes likewise, that our Law admits of no Foreign Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, and yet easily lets us see with all, how loosely those argue, who proceed upon a Supposition, that it is a Fundamental Right of this Nation, to have such a Common Law, as totally excludes the Ecclesiastical; inasmuch as in all the Collections of the Common Laws, the Church's Rights and Liberties and the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, are especially provided for. Besides, that the Ecclesiastical Laws stand on the same Bottom with other Parts of the Common Law of *England*, that is to say, a constant and immemorial Custom.

The other of these Treatises was look'd upon, at its first Publication, as very compleat in its kind; but was now enlarged with very valuable Additions occasioned by some Discourses a little before published, both for and against the Ecclesiastical Commission and the Dispensing Power; the most material Instances of which he thought requisite to take into his Consideration: The Subject of it is, *The Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction with respect to the Legal Supremacy*; and it was occasioned by King *James's* erecting a High Commission Court to censure and punish such as refused to submit to his Dispensing Power, and to publish in their respective Churches his Declaration for Liberty of Conscience. And himself tells us, it was written, when the Author of it was summoned to appear before this Commission, and was in continual Expectation of undergoing its Censure, for not complying with the Orders of it. This put him upon an enquiry into the Grounds on which it stood; and having made the Enquiry, he clearly states the King's Supremacy, and shews wherein it consisted, and what was the Extent of it; and pleads with great strength of Reason, and plenty of Authorities, whether Parliamentary or of Particular Persons of our own Nation and Foreigners, against such a Dispensing Power as was then claim'd and so earnestly contended for, and shews how inconsistent it is with the Frame of our Constitution and Government. These two Pieces are of the same Thread with that famous Tract, which immediately follows in the *Collection*, but which having been written long before them, has been already taken notice of; *The grand Question concerning the Jurisdiction of the Bishops in Capital Cases*. Which was a noble Instance of his intimate Acquaintance with both our Common and Statute-Laws, and which shewed him abundantly qualified for such an Undertaking as this.

The latter of these two Discourses, as I have observed, was occasioned by King *James's* Ecclesiastical Commission. But in a little time the state of Affairs was so changed here, that that fell of it self, and needed

needed no more to be said concerning it. But soon after a new Commission of a very different Nature was issued forth by King *William*, not only to the Bishops, but divers others of the more Learned and Eminent Divines; who accordingly met together in the *Jerusalem Chamber* at *Westminster* to review the *Liturgy*, and to try what Improvement might be made in it, and so were to have prepared a new Draught of it, against the next Session of the Convocation. And the Dean of *St. Paul's* must needs, to general Satisfaction, be named a Member of it, and he not only appeared as such so long as his Health enabled him, but made a principal Figure amongst them, and shewed a singular Wisdom and Judgment in the whole Design and Management of it. And I very well remember, that one of great Note amongst them made heavy Complaint of his being seiz'd by a Fit of the Gout in the midst of their Business, declaring the great want they had of his Presence and Assistance in their Debates, and the Directions they were desirous to have received from him.

And now I must leave off calling him Mr. Dean, and give him a higher Title: But before I do so, I would take notice, that during his being in that Station, he had both in King *Charles's* Reign, and again in King *James's*, been, by the joynt Suffrage of the Lower House of Convocation, for a long time together, chosen their Prolocutor. A Promotion they all look'd upon as justly due to his singular Abilities, for the discharge of it, by reason of his profound and extensive Learning, his depth of Judgment, his skilfulness in managing Debates, his quickness of Reply upon whatsoever Occasion, his great Prudence, his Gravity of Deportment, his Candor and Ingenuity, or whatever might qualifie him for that eminent Station. And he could not have failed to answer their Expectation, and adorn the Chair wherein they had placed him, in an unwonted manner, had it not been for want of Business to be transacted among them, and so of an Opportunity to exert himself. Nor is it probable that this Respect would ever have ceased to be paid him, so long as he was in a Capacity to receive it: Such was the Regard all had for his great Worth, and such the Deference every one was ready to pay him.

But now at length in the Year MDCLXXXIX, he was advanc'd to an higher Station in the Church, to the great Joy of its sincere and dutiful Sons, and who unfeignedly desired its Welfare. For the Bishoprick of *Worcester* becoming vacant by the Death of the Learned and Pious Dr. *Thomas*, formerly Bishop of *St. David's*, and thence translated to that Diocess, the Dean of *St. Paul's* was presently pitch'd upon to succeed him in that See; whereto he was Consecrated by the Right Reverend Father in God, Dr. *Henry Compton*, the present Lord Bishop of *London*, assisted by the Right Reverend *William* Lord Bishop of *St. Asaph*, and *Thomas* Lord Bishop of *Rochester*, in his Lordship's Chappel at *Fulham*, the 13th day of *October*, at the same time that the Reverend Dr. *Simon Patrick*, Dean of *Peterborough*, was Consecrated Bishop of *Chichester*, and Dr. *Gilbert Ironside*, Warden of *Wadham College* in *Oxon*, Bishop of *Bristol*.

But this his so well deserved Promotion did not put a stop to his indefatigable Industry for the good of others: It only gave him occasion to turn his Thoughts to some other Subjects he had not treated on before, as it likewise encouraged him to proceed farther in those he had. For as long as God allow'd him Life and Health, he would  
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by no means be taken off from his laudable Design of laying out his Time and Abilities for the Benefit not only of the Age in which he liv'd, but of those that should come after.

To this end he again enter'd the Lists with his former Adversaries the *Socinians*, who having begun to disperse their pernicious Pamphlets and other Treatises in order to pervert the less understanding and less wary Readers, into whose Hands they might come; he now thought it necessary to caution Persons against them. This he did in a Sermon preach'd at the *Tuesday* Lecture at St. *Lawrence-Jewry*, on these words, *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners of which I am chief; 1 Tim. I. 15.* Where he makes out our Salvation by Christ the eternal Son of God's assuming our Nature and suffering in our stead, in order to the reconciling God to us, and making a Propitiation for our Sins, to be both far more agreeable to Scripture, than the *Socinian* Exposition of this Doctrine, and far more beneficial and comfortable to Mankind, as having a much greater tendency to raise our Esteem and Love of our Redeemer, to beget in us a hatred of Sin, and strengthen our hope of Salvation by Christ. And whereas the *Socinians* are wont to decry the Mysteries of Faith, and severely to condemn our Interpretation of Scripture, and our Principles of Religion; upon this account, he effectually answers this Objection, by proving, that God may lawfully require of us in general the Belief of what we cannot comprehend, that after what manner soever the Method of Salvation by Christ be explained, there will be something of that Nature found in it, so that those who reject the Mysteries of our Faith, run into greater Difficulties than those who assert them; and again, that no more is required as a necessary Article of Faith, than what is plainly and clearly revealed; and by consequence, that there is no Contradiction between the Dictates of Reason, and the Holy Scripture, but an honest Christian may firmly assent to and profess all the Doctrines of his Religion, and especially those that are necessary to Salvation, more particularly those relating to our Saviour's Incarnation, and our Salvation by his Merits and Mediation, without renouncing his Reason and Understanding, or putting any forced unnatural Sense upon the Doctrines of the Gospel, whilst on the other hand the *Socinian* Interpretation is liable to divers inextricable Difficulties and Absurdities.

This touch'd these conceited Pretenders to Reason so nearly that a Reply was thought necessary, though it was a considerable time, (about three Years) before they ventur'd to appear in Print against it. But in the Year 1694, out came a Pamphlet with the Title of *Considerations and Explications of the Doctrine of the Trinity, &c.* where the first Attempt was upon the Bishop of *Worcester's* Sermon, as what they found press'd hardest upon them. And here they do him the justice to own his singular Talents, and Knowledge, and Understanding, and Skill in Polemical, no less than Practical Divinity, insomuch that *Si Pergama dextra*, had the Cause been defensible, it could not have with'd for a more accomplish'd Advocate against them. They call him the *Great Prelate*, and allow him to have all the Properties for which an Adversary may be either fear'd or reverenc'd, to have understood perfectly the Doctrine of the Church, and the Points in question; to be one that would commit no Oversight through Ignorance, Hast or Inadvertency; but  
would



would know how to take and manage all Advantages, and that he was too Experienced and Judicious to hazard his Cause, on the Success of an half-thought Hypothesis, a crude Invention, or pretty new Querk. But withall, they set themselves to pick all the holes they could possibly in his Sermon, as also in some other Sermons and Discourses reflected upon in the same Tract.

To this Attack of theirs he did not presently rejoyne; but yet he did not in the least give over the Cause, but when either his own Occasions, or his Health allow'd him better Leisure for it, or for whatsoever Reason he thought it more convenient, in the Year 1697, he reprinted his former Discourse against *Crellins*, concerning the *Doctrin* of *Christ's Satisfaction*, together with his forementioned Sermon, and a long Preface concerning the true State of the Controversie. And besides, the same Year he published likewise another Discourse, in Vindication of the *Doctrin* of the *Trinity*, with an Answer to the *Socinian Objections* against it.

In the Preface to the former of these he observes how the *Socinians* have shifted their Doctrines and alter'd their Catechism in this Point, and have endeavour'd to render the Difference between us and themselves, of much less weight than indeed they are, just as the *Romanists* do in our Disputes with them; and makes it apparent, that whatever they pretend, they in truth own no such thing as the *Death of Christ* being an *Expiatory Sacrifice* for the *Sins of Mankind*, the Design of the Book it self, I have already noted in its proper place, and so shall say nothing more of it here.

In the Preface to the other, he sets down the Cause of his writing it, which he tells us was this: That in the *Socinian* Tract pretended to be an Answer to his Sermon, he had met with this bold Assertion, to give it no harder a Name, That he had utterly mistaken in thinking that they deny the Articles of the new Creed, or *Athanasian Religion*, because they are Mysteries, or because, say they, we do not comprehend them: we deny them, because we do comprehend them, we have a clear and distinct Perception that they are not Mysteries, but Contradictions, Impossibilities and pure Nonsense. Which words, says the Bishop, contain in them so spiteful, so unjust, and unreasonable a Charge upon the Christian Church in general, and our own in particular, that I could not but think my self concerned, especially since they are addressed to me to do what in me lay, (as soon as my uncertain state of Health would permit) towards the clearing the fundamental Mystery of the *Athanasian Religion*, as they call it; the *Doctrin* of the *Trinity* which is chiefly struck at by them. And accordingly in this Preface he makes it his Business to expose their Proceedings, in dividing us all either into *Nominal* or *Real Trinitarians*, the former of these they charge with *Sabellianism*, and the latter with *Tritheism*; and shews how unjustly they misrepresent, and how unfairly they treat those whom they rank under each of the Denominations, observing withall, how ready they are to strike in with the *Deists*, to complement and cajole them, and with them to resolve all into Reason, and prefer Natural before Reveal'd Religion, and speak more favourably of the *Mahometans*, *Jews* and *Tartars*, than of such as believe the truly Christian Doctrines of the *Trinity* and *Incarnation*. He that would see more of their Behaviour in this respect, may find a full Account of it in a Book published long since this Bishop's Death, entituled, *Dissertations Historiques sur divers Sujets*, T. 1.

In the Book he applies himself to maintain *the Doctrine of the Trinity*, as it has been generally receiv'd in the Christian Church, and is express'd in the *Athanasian Creed*, from those horrible Imputations of Nonsense, Contradiction and Impossibility, with which those that call themselves *Unitarians*, do so confidently charge it, and proves, that the most considerable of the Ancient Christians were by no means of their Party. He considers distinctly and very nicely the *Socinians* Charge of Contradiction in the *Doctrine of the Trinity*, and clearly defends the *Athanasian Creed* from their scurrilous and blasphemous Reflections upon it, and deservedly exposes their forc'd and unreasonable Interpretations of Scripture as to our Saviour's Divinity, and more especially in relation to the first Chapter of *St. John's Gospel*, and most learnedly and judiciously proves the *Unitarian Doctrine* to be contrary to the Belief of the *Catholick Church* from the Beginning; and in the last place most convincingly answers those Objections in point of Reason, which they so much value themselves upon. Afterwards in a *Postscript* he takes notice of a *Socinian Pamphlet*, which in a very abusive manner reflects upon this most excellent Vindication of our Christian Faith, and sharply, but yet with great Decency exposes its Trifling and Buffoonry, observing withall, in a few Pages, how careful the Reflector had been not to venture upon the main Arguments for the Defence of this weighty Doctrine of the *Blessed Trinity in Unity*, and how feebly and unsuccessfully he had attack'd those he did venture upon. This *Postscript* was annex'd to his *Answer to Mr. Locke's first Letter*, occasioned by some Reflections the Bishop had made in the foresaid Vindication upon his *Essay concerning Humane Understanding*.

This Essay abounding with a Set of new Philosophical Terms. as if some wonderful Improvement of Knowledge was to have been hoped for from it, and being written with a graceful Air, and liveliness of Spirit, and elegance of Style, and politeness of Expression, a smartness in Reasoning, and an ingenious improvement of his Arguments to the best advantage by a closeness of Reference, and patness of Similitudes and Allusions, no wonder a new Scheme of Notions, and a profess'd Design of promoting true Understanding, and a right Apprehension of Things, set off with these uncommon Advantages, should easily recommend it self to the Affections of the Studious, especially the younger part of them. But then the more inviting and plausible such a Work is, the more dangerous will it certainly prove, if it leads to Scepticism, if it may be brought to favour a neglect of Reveal'd Religion, or a Misinterpretation of it; or in short, if it tends to propagate any sort of Principles that agree not with those of our most Holy Religion. That such a Use was made of that Essay the Bishop was very sensible, and therefore thought it necessary to warn his Readers of the danger some of them might otherwise be led into. He did not design an Answer to this Discourse, though it has had that since from a Person of great Ingenuity and Learning, (Mr. Lee, heretofore Fellow of *Emanuel College* in *Cambridge*, and of more than ordinary Note in that University, now Rector of *Tichmarsh* in *Northamptonshire*) such as neither the Author himself, nor any of his most zealous Disciples did ever yet think fit to give a Reply to: Which it's natural to suppose, some of them would before this have done, had they judged it would have been with good success. To go about lessening the

the Reputation of this Essay, was, you may plainly see by him, touching Mr. *Locke* in the most sensible part. He thought, no doubt, its being attack'd by so great a Man went no little way towards it; and therefore he makes such long Complaints, though he might soon have ended all occasion of them himself, would he have pursued the main Point, and answered plainly to what, for clearing it was reasonably enough required of him. For the Bishop, I say, did not intend an Answer to this celebrated Discourse, but yet he judged it requisite to take notice of what the Author had said, so far as concerned the Controversie himself was now engaged in. To which purpose he observes, that, as the Existence of an Infinite Being cannot be proved from our clear and simple Ideas, whilst in truth we have no such Ideas of it, so neither is it necessary in relation to the belief of the ever-blessed Trinity, that our Sensation and Reflection furnish us with clear and simple Ideas of this Distinction betwixt Nature and Person; it being sufficient that we firmly believe what God has revealed, though we do not fully comprehend the Nature of whatever is thus reveal'd.

In answer to this Mr. *Locke* complains, that what he wrote was without any thought of the Controversie betwixt the *Trinitarians* and *Unitarians*, and that he accounted himself wronged herein, since his Notions about Ideas had no Connection with any Objections, that are made by others against the Doctrine of the Trinity, or against Mysteries. But the Bishop tells him, that to lay the Foundation of Certainty as to Matters of Faith, upon clear and distinct Ideas, which was the Opinion his Lordship oppos'd, does certainly overthrow all Mysteries of Faith, and excludes the Notion of Substance out of Rational Discourse. And he professes the true and only Reason of his looking into this way of Certainty by Ideas to have been, that he found it apply'd, to promote Scepticism and Infidelity, and to overthrow the Mysteries of our Faith; adding moreover, that it was very possible his Meaning might be mistaken, or his Notions misapply'd, and that he had therefore now a fair Occasion given him to vindicate himself, and let the World see, that he had no ill Design, nor intended any Prejudice to the Christian Faith by what he had published. The same Method he also pursues, and presses more home upon him in another Letter: Wherein he proves Mr. *Locke's* Notion of Ideas, to be inconsistent with it self, and with the Articles of the Christian Faith, and puts him in mind, that the readiest way to clear himself from the Suspicion of having intended to serve the Interest of Socinianism and Infidelity, would be by openly declaring himself to own *the Doctrine of the Trinity*, as it has been receiv'd in the Christian Church, and is now profess'd by ours, in the Creeds and Articles of Religion: But yet a Declaration that he would not by any means be brought to.

This Task our Reverend Bishop had taken upon himself as a Divine, and a zealous Asserter of our truly Ancient and Catholick Faith. And who so fit to undertake the Defence of the Faith once delivered to the Saints, as those who are in the highest Stations, and of the chiefest Abilities in the Church? Their great Advantages above others call upon them to stand in the Gap, and resolutely oppose all those different Enemies, who are either audaciously affronting, subtly undermining, or imprudently weakning the weighty Evidences and Truths of our Holy Religion. This our great Prelate was too sensible of to forbear employing himself in so good a Work. He did not forget that his  
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high Office in the Church of God was a Trust committed to him, and for which he did expect one Day to give a strict account to his Sovereign Lord. And he would not spare his Pains, so long as the sharp Distemper he had been so long press'd with (and which at length put an end to his Life) would allow him the use of exerting his Abilities for them. He never valued the Trouble, I may truly say, where he foresaw it might be for the benefit either of the Diocess over which he so happily presid'd, or the rest of the Nation. He was an unwearied as well as highly useful Labourer in his Lord's Vineyard, so long as it pleas'd God to allow him Time and Strength for it.

Idleness, that Rust of the Soul, he had a perfect Aversion to, both before and after he was advanced to the Episcopal Throne. And of these his numerous Works already mentioned are an abundant Demonstration, and yet there are some others still remaining: As these Anonymous Tracts, of which he has been justly thought the Author, namely, *A Discourse concerning the Unreasonableness of a new Separation upon the account of the Oaths*; *An Answer to a Paper delivered by Mr. Ashton at his Execution to Sir F. C. Sheriff of London*; *A Letter to Dr. B. on refusing the Bishoprick of B. and W.*

And now at length if we attend him to *Worcester*, the Place of his particular Charge, we shall find, as might reasonably be expected from a Prelate of his Goodness, Ability and Industry, that he would not be wanting to make a due Inspection into the State of his Diocess, and to excite his Clergy to, and instruct them in the faithful discharge of their Duty in their several Stations: And as a worthy Instance of his Paternal Care in this Respect, he has left behind him a Collection of Charges at his Visitations, incomparably learned and useful as we have ever seen: An admirable Pattern for those that should come after to follow him in. These he published some time before his Death, for the Information of others, as well as those to whom they had been more immediately directed; and such as have seriously perused them must needs be sensible how high a value they ought to put upon them. Here we have most compleatly display'd the Nature and Dignity of the Priestly Function, together with the Duties and Rights of it, according to the Principles both of Law and Conscience.

In the first of these Discourses made at his Primary Visitation, *Oct. 21<sup>st</sup>. 1690.* after a brief, but unanswerable Vindication of the Episcopal Order, he proceeds to consider the Indispensible Duty of Bishops and their Presbyters, as to Residence, Preaching, and the Care of their Flocks, and recommends to them a plain, practical, useful way of Preaching, a diligent Catechising of Children, and a Care to bring them to Confirmation; and not only a constant, but devout Performance of the Publick Offices of the Church, together with a prudent Behaviour towards those who dissent from the Establish'd Church; a Readiness to visit the Sick, and to do it, not formally and superficially, but to its chief Ends and Purposes; a Frequent and Reverend Celebration of the Lord's Supper, as the most proper part of the Evangelical Worship; and lastly, a very particular Care of their own Conversation, that it might be such as becomes the Preachers of the Gospel of Christ, and those that are to be burning and shining Lights in the World. And the more effectually to press upon them a Regular Observance of their Duty in each of these respects, he acquaints them what Authority the Bishops us'd to have over the Clergy, by the  
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Ancient Ecclesiastical Law of this Realm, and what Censures they were liable to, in case of Offence. Concluding all with an earnest Exhortation to behave themselves with such Care and Caution, and such Fidelity in the discharge of their several Duties, as that himself might never be put to the uneasy Task of exercising the Power he had to proceed against Transgressors of the Ecclesiastical Laws. This was the Purport and Design of his first Charge.

The next time, for his Triennial Visitation was 1693, when it is not to be supposed, if he were in any tolerable measure of Health, that he would omit so essential a part of his Office, as this of meeting with his Clergy, and instructing and encouraging them in the faithful performance of their Duty, and an Enquiry after the Miscarriages of any that might possibly have been less mindful of it. Nor would he omit giving them a Charge, of the most proper and useful Points for them: And therefore I must mention, that what afterwards appear'd as a distinct Treatise of it self, (a compleat one indeed it is) was for the most part first delivered in his Charges this Year. His Discourse, I mean, *concerning Bonds of Resignation*. For it is not unlikely, that in the discharge of his Episcopal Function, and particularly in giving Institution to Benefices, he had met with Intimations of such Bonds having been required by some unreasonable and unjust Patrons which soon directed his Thoughts to this important Subject. But in fact it is plain, that he had such an occasion, to take into Consideration, the great Mischief that is done, not only to the Souls of those who suffer their Consciences to be thus ensnared, but in general to our Church and Religion, which cannot but be great sufferers by those wicked Simoniackal Contracts, either of this or any other like nature, whereinto either Careless or Indigent Clerks are too often drawn in order to a Livelihood in the World. And because Bonds of Resignation upon demand, so long as no Sum of Money is either paid down, or artickled for before-hand, are too often thought a safe Evasion of Simony, he here undertakes to prove that this Imagination is grossly Erroneous, and they only delude themselves with it. He expresses a singular Tenderness for the Rights of the Parochial Clergy, their Work and Duty being heavy and laborious, if it be performed as it ought to be, and argues for them against the unreasonable usage they too frequently meet with, that they ought not to have any new Burdens imposed upon them, under a pretence of Law, which neither they nor their Successors will be able to bear; adding moreover, that it was not meerly the Interest of the Clergy, but of our Religion, which lies at stake, and is liable to suffer more ways than one by this unjustifiable Method, if it find Encouragement, and under a pretence of Law, be recommended and put in practice. And the more fully to evince the Iniquity of these Bonds, he shews them to be against the intent of the Law, and inconsistent with the Freedom that ought to be both in giving and taking an Ecclesiastical Benefice, and a breach of the Oath to be taken by every Incumbent at the entrance upon his Living, against Simony; which is not limited by the Statute 31 *Elizabethæ*, but was in being long before; and that all the Pleas which are made for such Bonds are insufficient, and all trading for Livings, if suffered to go unpunished, will certainly ruin the best Church in the World, by lessening the Reputation of Churchmen, and taking off the good Affections of the People, and making them run into Faction and Infidelity. Thus soli-

citous was he to cure this pernicious and growing Evil: And the Evidence he has brought against it is so full and satisfactory, from Reason, Law, Conscience, and the dreadful Evils that may too probably ensue upon it, that none of the many Favourers of so bad a Custom have, in all this time, ever once attempted the Defence of it.

The next Triennial was 1696, the last the good Bishop ever saw, had he outliv'd 1699, we should no doubt have had the Benefit of that too, seen more Effects of his Care, and Usefulness to his Clergy. But though this was deny'd us, yet have we great reason to be thankful for what 'tother supply'd us with, no less than three different Charges for the same Year, deliver'd at so many several Places.

In the first of these he treats of the Trust committed to the Parochial Clergy, and the Duties hereby incumbent upon them, which he both explains, and presses upon them, from the Consideration of what was required of the Levitical Priests, besides that which was Typical and Ceremonial; and of what God expected from his Prophets, and the dreadful Condition they must be in, if they were not mindful to warn his People accordingly; and from the express Charge that is given in the *New Testament*, to feed the Flock of God, and be Examples to it: And then shews the Preference of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Proceedings, as now for a long time settled, before a Parochial or Congregational Discipline. And at last reminds them wherein a faithful Diligence in their Office consists, and what Course they all ought to take in order to it.

The Argument of the next being the particular Duties of the Parochial Clergy, he first puts them in mind of the indispensable Obligation they were under, as Labourers in their Lord's Vineyard, Teachers and Pastors of his Flock; Ambassadors from Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God, under all which Characters, they are represented in the *New Testament*; and then proceeds to a more particular Enumeration of the several Duties required of them, with respect to the *Lord's Day*, and other times of Publick Worship, exhorting them to a constant and diligent Preaching and Catechising, and a due and solemn Celebration of the Sacraments; as also to a Care to qualify themselves for resolving Cases of Conscience; and to set their Parishioners a good Example of Vertuous and Holy Living. And lastly, in order to a right performance of all these Duties, he recommends to them a Conscientious Residence amongst their Parishioners. Which Point he takes occasion to enquire into and settle, with that wonderful variety of Reading and Observations, which was so peculiarly eminent in all his Performances of this Nature.

Hereto is subjoin'd a Discourse concerning the Maintenance of the Clergy, which though printed as a distinct Tract, I take at first to have been only the latter part of this same Charge, but not improbably enlarged beyond what was spoken at the Visitation. This I the rather conclude, because he had propounded to enquire into two things; 1st. *The Duties whereto his Clergy stood obliged*; and 2dly. *The Encouragement which the Law gives in Consideration of it*. The latter of which Considerations is not pursued in that former Discourse, but in the Beginning of this is declared to be the Subject he intended now to consider. But be that as it will, it is certain, he gives a Learned Account of the *Manse* and Maintenance settled upon each Parish-Priest, the Oblations that were wont to be made by the People, and of the Tythes that

that were given and settled. The last of which he insists upon more largely, as to the Foundation in Law which they stand upon, and the Rules that are to be observ'd about them, the Exemptions that have been granted from Payment of them, and what Prescriptions have obtained, and Compositions have been made against them. In all which Particulars he speaks (as he does likewise in his two Arguments in the House of Lords) more like one who had diligently spent his time in the Study of the Laws, than one who had always appeared so eminent in his own particular Profession.

In his last of these Charges said to be delivered likewise in that Year 1696, he treats very particularly, and with his peculiar wonted skill in Law and History, of immemorial Prescriptions as to the Jurisdictions of the *Archbishops* and *Bishops*, *Archdeacons*, *Deans* and *Chapters*, the several Officers of the Bishops Courts, and the settling of the Bounds and Rights of Parishes, and that general Practice and Allowance which is the Foundation and Measure of the Common-Law; and thence enquires concerning the Pope's Canons and Decrees, how far they have been receiv'd here, and how far not; concerning the Power of making Canons owned by Act of Parliament, concerning the Right and Manner of summoning Convocations, and the due observation of the Canons made by them. Besides several other very considerable Observations interspersed, in relation to the Bishops Right of keeping their Courts in their own Names; a Lay-Patron's Power to revoke his Presentation, the Months allow'd for Presenting, whether Calendar Months, or to be reckoned by Weeks, the Allowableness of selling a Right of *Advowson*, &c.

Never were more Learned Charges given at any Visitations, nor considering the Author, was it to be expected that there should. Charges, full of solid and instructive Sense, rational and judicious Explications and Resolutions, nervous Arguments, good Law, and sound Divinity, enforced with serious and religious, weighty and convincing Authorities, Episcopal and Paternal, and yet gentle and friendly, obliging and highly useful Admonitions and Exhortations. The Subjects insisted upon were such as required a large measure of Understanding to treat of them aright, and the Management of them so far from deceiving, as to exceed the utmost Expectation of the Auditors. And oh! that not only those who heard them, but all the Clergy that read them likewise; would make it their constant study to reduce them to practice, 'twould be both to their own great Advantage, and that of the People committed to their Charge, the unwearied Care of whom he so zealously and so earnestly recommends to them. Thus we see his hearty Concern for his Clergy, that they might be duly mindful of their Pastoral Charge, to feed the Flock of God, with which they were intrusted, and might in all things shew themselves as *St. Paul* directed, *Tit. 2. 7, 8. Patterns of good Works, in Doctrine shewing Unconspicuousness, Gravity, Sincerity, sound Speech that cannot be condemned; that is to say, True Doctrine, coming with such clearness of Expression and Conviction, as not to be liable to Censure, and, that they might be as the same Apostle exhorts Timothy, 2 Tim. 2. 24, 25. Gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient, in weakness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure would give them Repentance, to the acknowledging of the Truth.*

And as he took care to instruct and encourage his Clergy in the performance of their Office, so was he mindful also of his own in punishing others for their gross Violations of God's Laws; as was particularly done, on *Midlent-Sunday*, 1696, to some Offenders in the Parish of *Old-Swinford* in the Diocess and County of *Worcester*, whom he not only subjected to the Churches Censures for their Wickedness, but that this Correction might make the better Impression upon themselves and others, when the Reverend Dr. *Ford*, the worthy Rector there, had preached two Sermons suitable to that solemn Occasion, inviting the rest of the Congregation to do their several Parts in order to the restoring such in the Spirit of Meekness, and admonishing the Offenders themselves to be sincere and hearty in their Repentance, as the only Means of receiving any Benefit by it, this excellent Prelate took occasion to add a Preface to these Sermons, recommending the usage of such Proceedings against Notorious Offenders, *as what (to use his own words) would bring more Honour to our Church, and the Religion established among us, than the warmest Disputes for our Constitution, without regard to the Practice of it.* Here he also takes notice of the too common Complaints of hard and irregular Proceedings in the Spiritual Courts, and replies, as it is too true, that there are no Courts but are liable to Abuses, but there is a difference to be made, between such as arise from the Rules and Orders of the Courts, and such which come only from the Personal Faults of those who are employ'd in them. The Methods of Proceeding in these Courts, he observes to be as ancient at least as of any other Court of the greatest Esteem among us. But where the Fault lies only in the Persons, he professes a hope that upon just Complaints effectual care would be taken to punish the Transgressors, and to prevent the like for the future. And if there have been scandalous Offenders, which through the neglect of the Clergy, or the proper Officers, have not been presented, he could not but think it just for the blame to lie where it ought, and that the Ecclesiastical Courts have no reason to be charged with other Mens faults. He commends Dr. *Ford* for his Readiness to have the Court duly informed of the Miscarriages and Crimes committed in his Parish, and bringing the Offenders to Publick Shame for them. And then concludes with a hearty Prayer that his seasonable and useful Discourse then preached might answer the good Ends for which it was designed. Of this Preface, I have here taken the more notice, because it is great pity it should be wholly lost, as it might otherwise have probably been in a little time, being only prefix'd to the forementioned Sermons, which it's to be doubted may never be any way known to far the greatest part of the Nation, and besides, may be in a while forgotten by most of those that now know them.

These are the Effects of his Episcopal Care, which himself has thought fit to communicate to the World, for the Instruction of others as well as those of his own Diocess, and have been for divers Years abroad in the World. But besides these there are also two valuable Instances of his Judgment in the House of Lords, in the Cases of two uncommon Appeals brought into that House, whilst his Lordship was a Member of it; the former relating to the Visitation of *Exeter College* in the University of *Oxford*, by the Right Reverend Father in God, *Jonathan*, then Lord Bishop of *Exon* (now of *Winchester*) the other relating to a Grant *ad Retinendum*, made to the Right Reverend Fa-  
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ther in God, *Thomas*, then Lord Bishop of *Lincoln*, (now his Grace the Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*) for holding the Vicarage of *St. Martyn* together with his Bishoprick, only for a certain Term, and the Right of Presentation upon the Expiration of that Term, whether belonging to the Crown, or to the proper Patron the Lord Bishop of *London*. Each of these Debates his Lordship thought worthy of his serious Consideration, and freely declar'd his Sentiments upon them, pleading with great clearness of Expression, great strength of Reason, closeness of Argument, and numerous Precedents both from Law and History, and answering all the Arguments brought on the contrary part.

What Influence these Excellent Arguments had in determining the Matters then under Consideration, I cannot positively say, but in fact it is certain that Judgment was given in both Cases pursuant to the Intent and Aim of them. These and many other Speeches which he made in that House, shew how well he appeared to what excellent purpose he sat there. Nor must I omit mentioning to what general Satisfaction he presided in his Cathedral and Consistory Court at *Worcester*. In the Visitation of which Church, he was as constant as of his Diocess, and as careful to make the best use of it; both telling and shewing them he came thither for more than forms sake: And therefore he opened every one of them with a Speech proper to the occasion of their Meeting, and his Design in calling them together. In which he always express'd himself, with that just sense of his own Power, and of their Rights too; with that resolution to amend what was amiss, and yet tenderness in the doing of it, that all of them could not but be sensible his only Aim was doing good, and therefore they the more readily joyned in doing their part towards it.

The Residence of the Canons was what he much desir'd to see regular and constant; as a thing of Duty in it self, Honour to the Church, and Benefit to the Place. But after some Proposals and Trials for that purpose, he perceived the surest and easiest way, would be settling it anew by the Royal Authority. For though the Dean and Chapter had found it necessary to inforce and fix Residence, by an Act of their own, pass'd some Years before, for that purpose, and afterwards confirm'd by the then Bishop in his Visitation; yet being different from Statute both in the Number of the Persons residing at once, and the Time of their continuing so, the Bishop (though he lik'd the Design) declar'd it was void by those Statutes which allow no Power but the Royal to alter or dispense with any one of them. But had they, to confirm it, got a Broad Seal, he should not have objected against that; and now he would make it the Ground of the Statutes for Residence in the design'd Revisal of them.

As for the old ones, he could not but say they were too hastily and inconsiderately drawn up, and no better transcribed, as was obvious from the Copy in use there. To remedy this he got the various Lectons from a MS. in *Bennet College Library*; but they in many Instances did not at all mend the matter. And to the Original there was no Recourse, for in the time of Queen *Mary* that was delivered up by Dean *Holland* to Cardinal *Pole*.

When therefore he began to injoyn Residence solely on the Foot of the Statutes, the Canons themselves objected, that the Statutes were obscure and ambiguous in that matter; thereby owning both the Need

and Advantage there would be of making all plain and on a sure Bottom; so in order to it, he got Copies of the Statutes of other Churches of K. H. VIIIth's Foundation. Some of these had the Alterations and Additions that were (for the good of those Bodies) propos'd in King Charles the Ist's time, and had been actually given to them if the succeeding Troubles had not made other Matters more necessary to be minded. This, though above 70 Years agoe, was the third Attempt that way (since King Henry's Foundation of the Deans and Canons of that Church) to accommodate Matters better to the State of it, and supply such Particulars as had been at first overlook'd, by the King's Commissioners authoris'd to give that Body of Statutes.

The Bishop having seen these Steps, and got these Helps towards it, judg'd, and plainly shew'd it was a thing feafable and commendable; and indeed for the Satisfaction and Interest of all Parties concerned, as such he recommended it at his Visitation just before his last Journey to London. Where, if Life had permitted, he would willingly have followed, and not been long, before he had happily effected it.

Then as for his *Consistory Court*; upon his first coming thither, he soon found it sunk in its Reputation and Usefulness, through the long absence of the Chancellor occasioned partly by his age and distance from it. And to remedy all Defects and Abuses, he often declared, as his most Learned Friend Judge Hales did, *That the Counsel were obliged to be faithful to their Clients, yet not to manage their Causes in such a manner, as Justice should be delay'd, nor Truth suppress'd, to promote which, was as much the Duty of their Calling, as it was the Office of the Judges, though not in so eminent a degree.* And not only to advise, but lead them to it, he in two or three Court-days dismiss'd most of the Causes then depending, in which generally few Proceedings had been made then *a stet in proximum*, upon the slightest Pretences. This he did for the present good, and to secure it for the future, and to make the Court it self very useful and beneficial to the People, it being an ancient and legal part of our Constitution (which he has shewn in his Preface to Dr. Ford's Sermons, and his Treatise of the *Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction*) he not only took care it should not suffer through the Faults of the Persons concerned in it, but that they should have no colour to justify themselves from any Rules in use there. He saw there was need of considering them, having too often observ'd, that much of the time was spent in little Artifices, and the manner of proceeding rather than on the Subject Matter, or Law in dispute. And therefore he directed the Chancellor, Register and Proctors of the Court to consider of the most compendious and effectual Rules and Methods, for their future Proceedings in all Causes. So after many Conferences held together, and Schemes drawn, one was compos'd and presented by them to his Lordship, by whom too it was examined and approved, and then Subscribed by them all, thus intituled, *Rules given by the Right Reverend Father in God, Edward, Lord Bishop of Worcester, to be observ'd by the Proctors and other Officers of the Consistory Court of Worcester, and signed by the Chancellor, Register and Proctors of the said Court.* Whereby it plainly appears, that many useles and obsolete Terms and Forms are laid aside, and none but such as are necessary and reasonable retained or insert'd; and through the whole both the Practisers and Parties that only regard and pursue Justice and Right, are encouraged by a quick and judicious Dispatch, and the Vexatious  
and

and Dilatory are as certainly punished for every unreasonable delay. And as Rules thus fit to be observed, they have received the Approbation of the Learned Judges and Advocates of the Honourable Courts in *Doctors Commons*, in Appeals transmitted to them. During his Time, many Matters of Importance and Difficulties were brought there, but he went through them all, with as much Ease to himself, and Satisfaction to others, as could in such Cases be expected: For he constantly examined things with that Dexterity and Sagacity, determined them with that Integrity and Impartiality, and (if there seem'd any occasion) supported his Sentences with that Evidence and Clearness of Law and Reason, that hardly any of those upon whom they pass'd, but receiv'd them (as indeed they ought to be) with a just Opinion of; and Submission to them.

Among several Causes worthy to be taken notice of, I shall choose to mention two, which he took particular care of, and because I can give it in his own words.

The first a Trial in his *Consistory* about the *Jus Patronatus* to *Northfield*: To which was set up the Title of the Crown, and of two considerable Gentlemen. The Day appointed for hearing it, was the next after the *Affizes* at *Worcester*, that the Council of that Circuit might be able to attend it; and the chiefest of them were all retained on one side or other (nay, that no side might suffer for want of it, one of them was on two sides, first as he declared for the Crown, and then for his other Client) who were first pleased to complement him on their appearing there before him, and afterwards in their pleading, by keeping close to the Point in hand. The further Account of this Matter, I shall now give you, as faithfully transmitted to me in his own Words.

“ August the 8th. 1695, the Cause was heard in the *Consistory-Court*,  
 “ my self present, and a very good Jury of 18 Clergy and Laity, and  
 “ the best Council of the Circuit retained, who neglected nothing that  
 “ serv'd for their purpose on any side.

“ The main Plea for the King was, that the Prior and Convent of  
 “ *Dudley* had presented six or seven times, as appear'd by our Regi-  
 “ sters; and if it did belong to them, then it fell to the Crown upon  
 “ the Dissolution:

“ It was pleaded in behalf of Mr. *Jolliff*, that it passed from the  
 “ Crown to the Duke of *North.* and so came to his Ancestors; but this  
 “ could not be made out; for the Grant being supposed, was only of  
 “ Tythes, and the Patent 13th *Jacobi* to explain it, was called a *Pro-*  
 “ *ling Patent* and of no Effect in Law.

“ Mr. *Jerroise* pleaded the two last Presentations by his Ancestors,  
 “ who purchased the Mannor of *Weely* (to which this Advowson was  
 “ appendant, as his Council said) of the *Berkeleys*, for which they  
 “ produc'd a *Leiger-Book* of their Family; and *Berkeley* had contested  
 “ the Right of Advowson with the Prior and Convent, *A. D.* 1479,  
 “ upon which a *Jus Patronatus* was granted, and the Prior and Con-  
 “ vent appealed to the Arches; where their Appeal was dismiss'd; but  
 “ in the mean time the Living was lapsed, and the Bishop collated.

“ *A. D.* 1558, upon the Death of *Walker*, *Squire* was presented by  
 “ *Leveston*, by vertue of a Grant from the Prior and Convent to cer-  
 “ tain Trustees 21 *H.* 8. and this Clerk was admitted 3 *Jan.* 1558.

“ *Q. Mary* died November 17. *A. D.* 1587. 28 *Eliz.* she presented *Ja-*  
 “ *cob*

“ *cob White*, per lapsum, as appear'd by the Register. But how could  
 “ this be if it were the Right of the Crown? unless we suppose wrong  
 “ Information.

“ A. D. 1639, Sir *Th. Jervoise* granted the next turn to *Phinebas*  
 “ *White*, who presented *Timothy White* and died Incumbent. A. D.  
 “ 1660, *Thom. Jervoise* then presented Dr. *Hinkley*, who held it to A-  
 “ pril, 1695; but there were several Trials between *Glover*, who had  
 “ the King's Title, and *Hinkley*; and at an *Affizes* here, the Jury brought  
 “ it in an Advowson in Gros by special direction of the Judge; but it  
 “ was over-rul'd above, as may be seen in *Vaughan's* and Sir *Tho. Jones's*  
 “ Reports; but the main Point there was upon the Demurrer. The  
 “ Question before us, was not upon a Writ of Right, but to whose  
 “ Clerk I was to give Institution; and for that the Possession of *Jer-*  
 “ *voise* was thought the best Ground by the Jury; and accordingly I  
 “ gave it.

“ But I was not satisfied about the Original Title of the Prior and  
 “ Convent of *Dudley*.

“ A Confirmation of the Grant of the Church of *Northfield* by *Ger-*  
 “ *vaise Paynel* the Founder, by Pope *Lucius* the 3d. was produced in  
 “ Court, but cancelled and could not be read; but it appears by the  
 “ Copy in the *Monasticon*, that it bears date A. D. 1190. and there  
 “ the Church is given to the Priory of *Dudley cum Capella de Coston*;  
 “ but it is observable, that the same Bull requires them to present a  
 “ Clerk to the Bishop, who was to answer to the Bishop in *Spiritualibus*,  
 “ and to the Prior in *Temporalibus*. Which was the Form of an Appro-  
 “ priation at that time; for as yet they had them not *ad proprios Usus*;  
 “ but they were bound to present a Clerk, who was their Vicar: But  
 “ such an Appropriation and a Rectory were inconsistent, as I told the  
 “ Council, and desired them to clear it. But they did not, but talked,  
 “ that all Rights of Advowsons were at first in Gros and not appen-  
 “ dant to Mannors; which was a great mistake in such Learned Law-  
 “ yers, as I could easily have shew'd; but I forbore out of respect to  
 “ them. However it doth not clear this Point, for the Advowson in  
 “ Gros is not mentioned in the Original Grant, but the Church is  
 “ given, *i. e.* the Profits, which if the Grant hold good, must entitle  
 “ them to the Rectory it self, and then, how could they so often pre-  
 “ sent a Rector as they did; and it is owned by them to be a Rectory  
 “ in their Presentations.

“ The several Bishops of *Worcester* finding a continued course of  
 “ Presentation by the Prior and Convent to the Rectory of *Northfield*  
 “ enquired no further; no body appearing to contest their Right, till  
 “ *Berkeley* did it, A. D. 1479; and then the Bishop granted a *Jus Pa-*  
 “ *tronatus*, and after that the Appeal of the Prior and Convent was dis-  
 “ miss'd: So that after the Contest, no Presentation of theirs appears  
 “ in our Registers, till that blind one, A. D. 1558.

“ *Berkeley's* Title seems to stand thus, *Northfield* belongs to the Man-  
 “ nor of *Weely*, which was in the *Berkeley's*, and derived from *Roger*  
 “ *Berkeley*, who married the Sister of *Gervaise Paynel* the Founder of  
 “ the Priory, who was the Relict of *John de Somery*, whose Posterity  
 “ were Barons of *Dudley*. But the Estate fell to two Coheirs 10 E. 2.  
 “ and by the elder Sister the Title of Lord *Dudley* came to *Sutton*. It  
 “ seems this *William Berkeley* was not satisfied with the Title of the  
 “ Priory and Convent, and hoped to recover it, as *Thomas Berkeley*  
 “ had

l. v. Prior.  
de Dudley  
97.

All Ad-  
vowsons  
appendant  
till Appro-  
priations  
came in.  
V. Dugd.  
Warw. p.  
99.

“ had done the Rectory of *Slimridge* (in the Diocess of *Worcester* at that time) from the Abbey of *Gloucester*, who pretended that it was given to them by *Roger Berkeley*, A. D. 1146. It appears by this that there were some pretended Donations of this kind, which could not bear a Contest. This Case was afterwards heard at the *Common-Pleas*, and Judgment was given for Mr. *Jervoise* against the Pretence of the King's Title.

The other I promised to give some Account of, was a Cause promoted against one *Haynes* of *Feckenham*, for Incest with his own Sister's Bastard. But a Rule for a Prohibition out of the *King's-Bench*, issued in *Hilary Term*, 6*W.* 3. and by vertue of that the Proceedings were stay'd until *Trinity Term*, 8*W.* 3. when upon hearing a Learned Argument from *William Dobyms*, Esq; at that Barr, the Court awarded a Consultation; and *Haynes* submitted to the Penance enjoyn'd him.

Some Authorities in that Argument being such as lay out of the way of a common Lawyer, the Court could not but wonder at hearing them urg'd there; but Mr. *Dobyms* was too modest to take the Honour of it to himself, so in the Conclusion said he was beholden to a Learned Friend of his for them. It was indeed to the Bishop himself, who sent him by Letter a full account of that matter; which I will now present the Reader with, having had the favour of a Copy of it from an undoubted Hand, and is as follows.

“ The Reason I have sent my Answer no sooner was the Absence of our Register these Holy-days, so that the Acts of the Court were not delivered to me till this Day: By which I find that the material Articles are, that by the Table of Marriages set forth by Authority, A. D. 1563, it is express'd, that a Man is forbid to marry his Sister's Daughter, and that *Th. Haynes* of *Feckenham* and *Eleanor* were Brother and Sister, and always so reputed; that this Sister had a Natural Daughter called *Sarah*, who was married to *Th. Haynes* Brother to *Eleanor* some Years since, and hath had Children by him, at least one.

“ The Allegation on the other side consists of these things, (1.) That by the Statute 32 H. 8. c. 38. it is enacted, *That no Reservation or Prohibition, God's Law except, shall trouble or impeach any Marriage without the Levitical Degrees, and that no Person be admitted in any Spiritual Courts to any Process, Plea, or Allegation contrary to the said Act*; and that the Marriage now impeach'd was not nor is against God's Law, or within the Levitical Degrees: (2.) Or at least it is not so objected. (3.) That the nearness of the Kindred was unknown to the Parties at the time of Marriage, so that here are three Points.

1. “ Whether this Marriage be within the Statute?
2. “ Whether the not laying it so, as to be against God's Law, or within the Levitical Degrees, makes the Court liable to a Prohibition?
3. “ Whether there were such Ignorance as to Excuse them?

1. “ As to the first, I could not have thought this could have born a Dispute in any Court in Christendom. For the saying it is not against God's Law is to overthrow all Incest on the account of Consanguinity; for that depends not upon Marriage or not Marriage,

“but the Nearness of Blood. Is it possible for any Man to think, that because the Sister was not married therefore her Daughter is not so near in Blood to her Brother as she had been if she had been married. The words of the Law are plain, *Levit. 18. 6. None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him*; the Vulgar Latin truly renders it, *ad proximum Sanguinis sui non accedet*; and all the other Versions agree with it, that it is to be understood of a Relation by Nature and not merely by Marriage. The words originally signify the Remainder of thy Flesh, *i. e.* any Person that comes near to the same natural Stock. And the Jews who best understood the proper Sense of these words, do affirm, that if the Person be equally near in Blood, whether born in Marriage or not, it is equally forbidden. For which I will first give Mr. Selden's words, whose Authority may be more regarded than any Civilian's or Canonist's: *Eandem aiunt esse rationem Fratris ex Stupro vel Adulterio ab alterutro Parente suscepti, & ejus qui Thoro natus est legitimo, uti etiam Sororis.* And he goes on, *Tantundem habent de Amitâ & Materterâ, diversum non esse sive ex Nuptiis sive ex Stupro seu Adulterio alterutricus Parentis prognata fuerit; modo eo naturalis Sanguinis genere, eum de cujus Nuptiis, queritur contingat*: So that as long as the Blood is the same, the Incest is as great, whether born in Wedlock or not; and because you tell me, somebody said, that a Man might marry his own Bastard, I shall repeat some more words of his: *Idem aiunt de filiâ sive ex Uxore ante Nuptias sive aliunde ex Stupro aut Adulteri genita.*

Selden. de  
7. N. &  
G. l. 5. c.  
10. p. 591.

De 7. N.  
& G. l. 5.  
c. 1.

“But this was not Mr. Selden's Opinion alone, for Pufendorf saith the same; *Id quoque admonendum Hebræos antiquos in Connubiis prohibitis Fratrum & Sororum nihil putasse interesse: Utrum Soror illa forte ex Adulterio fuerit concepta, an ex legitimo Concubita. Adeoque quantam ad prohibitionem Matrimonii pro Sorore habebatur, quæ ex alicujus Novercâ & Adultero genita erat.*

“As to the Sense of the Civil Laws, Zepper affirms, *Ut nihil interesse Leges Civiles dicant, an ex justis Nuptiis an ex injustis vel illegitimis Cognatio descendat, an verò non, nam ex scortatione natam sororem, uxorem ducere non licet*: Zepper de Leg. Mosai. Forensibus, l. 4. c. 19. p. 502.

“Gabriel Paleotus a great Civilian and a Canonist saith, *Cum expresse multis locis & Civili & Pontificio Jure traditum sit nihil interesse ad impediendum Matrimonium, an ex justis Nuptis cognatio descendat an injustis.* Paleot. de Nothis & Spuriis, c. 7. n. 2, 3. And he adds further, *Id vero ita receptum dicitur ut quamvis cæteris in rebus illegitimè nati nullum jur Conjunctiois à patre ducant in hæc unâ tamen Causâ ubi de Matrimonio agitur, Voluerunt Leges eorum perinde ac legitimorum rationem habendam, eo quod in Matrimoniis Naturale Jus & Pudor imprimis inspiciendus est.*

“It is to no purpose to produce any more Authorities since by these we see that the Jews so understood the Law of God, and the same Sense is receiv'd in the Civil and Canon Law.

“But to come nearer home, for I know how little Foreign Authorities are regarded in these Courts; we have a solemn Declaration to the same purpose in the *Tables of Degrees of Consanguinity and Affinity as to Marriage*, set out by Archbishop Parker, and confirmed by the Canons, *A. D. 1603. Can. 39.* there is this Rule, *Item quod*

“ *quod secundum leges, Consanguinitas impediens & dissolvens Matrimonium contrahitur, tam ex illicito Coiti Viri & Mulieris qua per justas eorum Nuptias.* And my Lord Chief Justice *Vaughan* in the Case of *Hill and Good*. fol. 327. saith, That if by a lawful Canon a Marriage be declared to be against God's Law, we must admit it to be so; for a lawful Canon is the Law of the Kingdom as well as the Law of the Land. And this he speaks on occasion of this very Canon. Now by this Table the Sister's Daughter is expressly mentioned.

“ By these things this Matter appears so clear to me, that I think little more need to be added.

“ All the Objections I have heard are,

1. “ That the Common-Law takes no notice of the Canons.

“ This appears quite otherwise in a matter of Marriage, as is plain by *Vaughan's* Argument in that Case.

2. “ That by Law Bastards are not reckoned among Children. *Qui ex damnato coitu nascuntur, inter liberos non computantur.* 1 Inst. fol. 103. That is true as to Legal Inheritances, but not as to an Incestuous Marriage.

3. “ But the main Objection is from *Pierston's* Case. 1 Inst. fol. 235. who married the Daughter of the Sister of his first Wife, for which he was question'd in the Spiritual Court, and it was resolved by the Court of *Common-Pleas* that the Marriage could not be impeach'd, for that the same was declar'd by the said Act of Parliament to be good, in as much as it was not within the Levitical Degrees.

“ In answer to this, (1.) This was not the same Case, for it was not his own Sister's Daughter, but his Wife's Sister; but here it is upon the account of Consanguinity and not Affinity. (2.) There was a Consultation granted after the Prohibition, as *Vaughan* shews in two places, fol. 248, 322. The same in *Mann's* Case, *Cr. El.* 228. In *Remington's* Case of the same nature, *Hobert* owns that there was cause for a Divorce, fol. 181. In *William de Chadworth's* Case in *Coke*, 1. Inst. fol. 235. there was a Divorce from the Mother, because he had first carnally known the Daughter, which is allowed by *Coke*, and shews, that Incest is not grounded meerly on Marriage, and he there mentions Consanguinity as a sufficient ground for a Divorce à *Vinculo Matrimonii*.

2. “ As to the 2d Point the Articles are drawn upon the Table of Marriages and the Canon 99; but these being grounded upon the Statute 25 H. 8. c. 19. I suppose no Prohibition will lye against Legal Proceedings.

3. “ For the 3d. we have the Deposition upon Oath of the Minister who was to have married them, who is a grave and sober Man, that before the Marriage he told them of the Incest, and therefore refused to marry them; but they were married by another who knew nothing of it.

Besides the constant attendance and care of his own particular Court, and doing all the good to, and for others, that he was capable of effecting by it; which he apparently attained in many Instances. Besides this, where he saw there were Irregularities and Abuses, that could not be reached that way, his Goodness was so unwearied and extended, that it soon considered other Methods, and took all proper Courses for remedying these too.

The Concern he had, the Service he always shew'd for the Church and Poor, when injur'd in their just Rights, Possessions and Supports, made him with Compassion, take them in as Objects worthy his Care: And being on some Occasions too sensible, that many pious Gifts designed for the Maintenance of the Church, Schools, and other Publick Charities, were in some places sunk, in others diverted quite contrary to the Intents and Uses of the Donors, made him obtain a Commission of Charitable Uses out of the *Chancery*; in the Execution of which he exerted himself with a commendable Zeal, and to a considerable Expence. But the Delays were too many, and Opposition too great, to get all the Business of it examined, adjusted, and dispatched within the compass of Time the Commission required. To supply that therefore he soon obtain'd another, though again often interrupted by the Delays, Designs and Power of those who as Possessors or Invaders of those Donations, were engaged to raise all kind of Difficulties, yet he got through them all, made many Discoveries, and a considerable Progress therein; and had settled those Matters so much to the Publick Interest and Honour of the Country, that the Commissioners readily joyned in making a Decree pursuant thereto. But this, with the return of the Commission to *London*, was said to be lost, yet probably not so lost, but that if he had liv'd a little longer after it, 'tis not unlikely it would have been suddenly recovered.

However though it had not all its intended effect, yet he saw several good Fruits of his Pains, some Charities better regulated and disposed, others retriev'd and new settled, but much more of this kind had been done could he have seen it happily compleated. At the opening each of these Commissions, he made a Speech in the *Town-Hall*, explaining the Nature and Design of them (besides two or three incidental ones) which it's to be hoped, with some Miscellanies of Letters, Speeches, &c. may sometime or other see the Light, though at present not thought proper, whether because they might not seem correct enough for so great a Man, or because they relate to some particular Persons and Things, which had better not be made so publick. But those Considerations, I must again hope, may at last be outweigh'd by the Service they will do to the Publick.

There is one thing still behind, very fit to be mentioned, in which he was not wanting to shew his Concern and Care, and that was the settling Sir *Thomas Cooke's*, Bar. (of *Bentley* in *Worcestershire*) his noble Benefaction of 10000*l.* on *Gloucester-Hall* in *Oxford*. For he thought 'twas not only a Benefaction to his County, but would be to Learning it self; by the Foundation's observing that Body of Statutes which were so well calculated for that purpose, and which he and other great Men had perused. This in all probability had been so settled had the Bishop lived some Months more, or Sir *Thomas* surviv'd him a little longer. But however as he declar'd this to be his fix'd Intention (as I am inform'd) may still appear by several Letters under his own Hand to the Bishop on that Subject: And therefore it may reasonably be hop'd, that his Heir will see abundant cause to settle it on the same Place, and in the same Manner.

So did this great Prelate highly grace and adorn every Station he was plac'd in, not only till he ascended to, but likewise when seated on the Episcopal Throne, and in the House of Peers; in no  
Time



Time or Place was he idle, or triflingly employ'd in such insignificant Studies as differ little from Idleness, such as may divert the Thoughts, and fill the Mind with uselefs Speculations and impertinent Niceties, and furnish Persons with Matter for Discourse and Dispute, but do not make them either wiser or better as to any of the great Purposes of Living. He was always conversant in the most weighty and substantial Parts of Learning, such as became a most Judicious Scholar, and a Reverend Father of the Church. Whatever he did preach upon difficult Points of Religion, it was ever in a manner singularly instructive and affecting. His Polemical Discourses were quick, nervous, and convincing. His Historical Tracts were a most judicious Critick upon our other Historians, detecting their Errors, where they were not reconcileable, and giving a Reconcilement of them, where there were any Grounds to found it on. What he wrote touching any Points of Law, had not only that force of Argument in it, but the Multiplicity also of Precedents to support what he affirm'd, that the ablest Lawyer might be justly surpris'd to see himself equalled in his own Faculty.

In short, view him in every Part of Learning he at any time engag'd in, and you will find him as perfect a Master of it, as if that had been his only Study. Such was the Extent of his Knowledge, such the Vigour of his Natural Abilities, such his daily Application towards the best Improvement of his Understanding; and such the wonderful Success of his Endeavours after it. His Industry ran parallel to his large Capacity; and both of them were such as might deservedly challenge the highest Admiration of all that partake of the Fruits of them. His vast Stock of Learning began to display it self very early, and he was always after treasuring up new Matter in order to whatever Undertaking he might be called to.

He had a noble Library, collected at a vast Expence of Time, Pains and Money, as every one may assure himself, though he have no other knowledge of it, than what appears in the Writings of its Owner; and that it was thought worthy to be transported to another Kingdom, by a very good Judge of it, the most Reverend Father in God, *Narcissus* Lord Archbishop of *Armagh*, and Primate of *Ireland*; who for the Promotion of Learning and Religion in that Kingdom, to his own Immortal Honour, has erected a handsome Fabrick for them, and placed them in it, for a Publick Library in *Dublin*, where it will remain a lasting Monument of this great Bishop's Industry and Judgment in collecting it, as well as of the Lord Primate's most eminent Bounty and Generosity in so incomparable a Benefaction.

Besides which there were a considerable Number of valuable MSS. relating chiefly to our own Nation and Constitution, and which now make part of the great Collection of the late Secretary of State, *Robert Harley*, Esq;

And his Lordship had so thoroughly digested his Books, and was so perfectly Master of what was contained in them, that himself was thereby plentifully furnished with all sorts of Learning, which he had in the greatest readines upon all occasions. Such a Collection, so wisely made, shewed both his unwearied Diligence in collecting it, and his admirable Skill in what he had collected: But the Use of it was what he all along aimed at. To what immense account his Acquaintance with these numerous Volumes turned, I may appeal to all

the Learned World, and especially to his Adversaries of all sorts, who so constantly felt the irresistible force of his Arguments. For we are many ways assur'd, his daily Conversè with his own most excellent Study, the choicest perhaps of any private Person's of his Time, had deservedly raised him to the highest pitch of Reverence and Veneration from all that were not perfect Strangers either to himself, or his many Learned Works. Some little Account whereof I have here attempted, and as imperfect as it is, any one may easily observe from it, how high an Estimate they justly deserve to have put upon them.

They might seem indeed a considerable Library of themselves, such as is of singular Worth, for the Excellency of the Composition, their Strength and Clearness of Arguments, and a great variety of the most important Subjects handled in them. There is a large Collection of instructive and persuasive Sermons, set off with all the Ornaments of Divine Rhetorick; divers admirable Defences of the Christian Religion, particularly as taught and practis'd amongst our selves, against several different sorts of Adversaries, *Deists, Socinians, Papists, Dissenters,* &c. enough to convince them all of their respective Errors and Heresies, and to stop their Infidelity and Prophaneness, would they but seriously apply themselves to the impartial perusal of them: Historical Relations and Remarks very accurate and compleat in their kind; Ecclesiastical Cases full of great Reading, acute Observations, and conclusivè Inferences, depth of Thought, and strength of Judgment; and some Treatises relating to our Common and Statute, as well as Civil and Canon Law, giving light to divers weighty and intricate Points in each of these. Others have written excellently well upon some one or more of these Heads, but he did it so admirably on every one of them that no one perhaps has ever outdone, or is like to equal him. But that we may a little more dilate upon his Character; As to his Person,

He was tall, graceful and well proportion'd; his Countenance comely, fresh and awful, in his Conversation cheerful and discreet, obliging and very instructive, and always kept an Esteem and Respect to all who conversed with him. His Apprehension was quick and sagacious, his Judgment exact and profound, his Memory very tenacious; no Man sooner discerning the Strength of a Cause, or determining truer as to the Merits of it: Nor was his insight into Persons less quick and just, he soon perceiving their Capacities and Abilities, as well as their Designs and Interests. By these singular Talents, as he presently made himself a Master of whatever he apply'd himself to, so he shew'd it was his constant and indefatigable endeavour, to make that vast Knowledge and Experience he had acquir'd, the most beneficial to the Publick Interest both of Church and State. In which he was so successful, that it has left him a Name highly venerable among all those who regard the welfare of our excellent Constitution, and wish the Advancement of Sound Learning and True Religion under it.

This was justly his due, and to his further Honour, it will be requisite to view him a little more particularly in those things wherein he was allow'd to be eminent.

By what I've so often had occasion to mention, it appears how great he was in his Writings, neither did he make a less Figure in  
speak-

Speaking on those various Occasions that frequently required it from him; not only the Matter, but his Manner commanded Attention from the Hearer. An Energy there was in the Sense to convince the Reason; and an Energy in the Delivery too, to move the Affections of Men; there was Authority, Life and Gracefulness in it. In so decent, and withall prevailing a manner, did he carry himself in the House of Lords, in Courts of Delegates, and in his own Consistory, and in Commissions for Charitable Uses; and thereby gained himself so general an Esteem and success in Business, that all admir'd, and yet scarce any could envy him for it.

What he had thus acquir'd, he maintained throughout, and though great and eminent, was always constant and equal to himself, and did not discharge his part with less Credit, in matters of Private, than Publick Business. He was intrusted then with Affairs of Secrecy and Importance, and those he managed with such Faithfulness and Skill, as to procure the Esteem and Thanks of such who committed them to his Conduct. Nature truly did design him for many kinds of Business, which he ever discharg'd with great dexterity.

He had made it his care to acquaint himself with the Nature and Extent of every Station he went through, and to understand the Grounds it stood upon, and all the several Duties and Powers appendant to it, whether deducible from the first Exercise and Origin of it, or its Progress and Establishment in succeeding times; or whatever he was engaged in, let it be ne'er so distant from his proper Employments, or different from his usual Studies, he would thoroughly and could quickly understand it. And by his Foresight and Vigilance in every Case, generally preventing or overcoming all the incidental Difficulties, he would then pursue it, with such Care and Judgment, such Industry and Expedition, as has been to the Admiration of all those concerned in it.

From hence his Fame grew so great and universal, that he was consulted on many and very different Subjects and Occasions. Some great Men that are gone, and some now alive, have frequently desired his Opinion in Cases of Consequence and of Difficulty (as may be seen by several of their remaining Letters) and he in return deliver'd it, (as appears by those Answers which he preserved) with great strength of Argument and freedom of Judgment. Thus the World was in many things more oblig'd to him than was commonly known, but those who desir'd his Advice, fail'd not to express their Satisfaction in, and Thanks for it. In Cases of Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Cognisance, in Points of Civil and Canon-Law, in matters of History and Facts relating to our Constitution, in Debates of the darkest Antiquity or deepest Controversie, in things of a Moral and Casuistical Nature, in useful Designs for Publick Good, and Private Benefactions to Posterity, he had been often consulted with, and appeal'd to.

The known Strength and Impartiality of his Judgment, and the Depth and Extensiveness of his Learning, gave him these new occasions of shewing and using them, and the Satisfaction and Benefit others received by it, afterwards repeated and increased them, sometimes to his Interruption in other Studies and Designs. But though he was not fond of the Trouble, yet would he not refuse it, was very glad he could be so serviceable to the Publick, and useful to his Friends.

Thus

Thus he shewed himself, whether employ'd in Publick Business, or on Particular Occasions, consulted by his Friends, and for the discharge of his own Peculiar Province, all that know him must own, he understood, and attended it in every part: As a true Father of our Church, in his Ordinations, Institutions, Confirmations and Visitations; as a Lord Spiritual in Parliament in attending (as much as ever Health would permit) the Business of that House, in promoting the Welfare and Security of our Church and Government in all his Aims, Speeches and Votes there: as an Ecclesiastical Judge in the good Orders of the Court, in the Amendment of Defects and Correction of Abuses and Offences, in the dispatch of Business, and the justice of his Sentences.

He receiv'd several Threats, and more than once had notice of such Barbarous Designs against him, as would have aw'd a Man of an ordinary Spirit, or made one of less concern for his Duty, to have desisted from the further discharge of it: in the Controversies with the Papists, I mean, and chiefly in the time of the Popish-Plot. But he did not discontinue nor slacken his Endeavours for this; no! he press'd them closer, expos'd their Pretences in still further Instances of great Learning and Judgment. At length he pursued them, till some came so near downright Impudence, as scurrility of Language, and denial of plain fact; others to silence, or what is worse, little Cavils and secret Misrepresentations. Nay, some went so far, as either to deny that there were such Authors, or such Words in those Authors, which he had quoted. Upon notice of this he went to Court, and before the greatest Persons there, produced those Books and the very Passages in them, which were challenged, somewhat to the Confusion, though not perhaps to the Conviction of such, who make no scruple of arguing against the plain Evidence of their own Senses.

In fine, he was a Man of enlarged Capacities, and great Natural Abilities, of mighty Acquirements and constant Improvements; a greater thing need not be said of each of them, than that they were truly answerable one to another. Consider him then in all these Parts, and 'twill produce this just Reflection, that he knew every thing that was necessary, or of use in his Profession and Station, and what he did know, 'twas justly and exactly. He was not to be contented with a Superficial Knowledge, for in Difficult Cases he had too great a love of the Truth to be easily satisfied, but the great reach of his Understanding made him soon Master of Things. He was not for heaping up a vast Mass of Learning, and then lying buried, as it were, in the midst of it: But as he had a vast desire of Knowledge, so he was not at the pains of getting it, more for his Private Satisfaction, than the Publick Good. Nor was he so loaded and incumbred with Learning (the case of some eminent Men) as to be better able to tell what others have said, than what was the properest to the Point, to abound so much with other Peoples Judgment and very Words, as to lose and confound their own. He was not all Quotations and Authorities, but as he well knew what others had said before him, so (only as was necessary) did he state, confirm or refute their Opinions with proper Remarks on them, still advancing in the Point, and improving the Reader. Of so great a Stock and Variety of Knowledge too, never had Man more of what was useful and to his purpose,

or

or readier and more at command, than he always shewed his was.

Such was the Accuracy of his Taste and Judgment, the Compass of his Knowledge and Experience, and such his Care and Industry to employ them to the best Services, that it made a very considerable Person, and one of his great Friends say, *'twas a thousand pities so extraordinary a Man as he, should ever be taken from us*, thinking, no doubt, he could hardly with a greater Benefit to the Publick, than that he should last as long as that did.

This was peculiarly eminent and distinguishing in his Character; that no one more happily joined the Man of Learning and Business together. Who better shewed that they were not inconsistent, but improved by each other's Company? Who attained both of them to a greater Compass and Readiness, or directed them to a better Advantage? To be so deeply and universally Learned, that all Scholars who conversed with him, or his Writings, admired him for't, thought it was His only, and a great Talent; to be so well turn'd to, and skill'd in Government and Business, as to make Men always us'd to the management of them, think that must be his only Province; was a rare and valuable Instance of the Extensiveness and Application of his Genius.

After these, it ought not to be forgotten, how very agreeable and pleasant he could be, when he saw fit in Conversation, how true a Judge and Observer of Decorum, how exact in his Behaviour and proper in Address. These may be thought little things in him, that had so much greater; but yet I think they appear much the better and more extraordinary for that, and indeed generally serve to recommend those greater things to the World, and frequently make them more useful and successful.

He was of a strong healthy Constitution, and in probability might have much longer enjoy'd it, had he not impaired it by constant hard Study, which at length brought the Gout upon him, the common Disease of a studious sedentary course of Life, and after above twenty Years struggle, fixing in his Stomach, proved fatal. In this last Sickness he endured long and intense Pains with great Patience and Resignation, and some few Days before his End, desired to receive the Sacrament, which was administred to him by his worthy Chaplain, the Reverend Dr. *Goodwyn*, now Archdeacon of *Oxford*, and then he declared, that he died, as he constantly had lived, in Communion with the Church of *England*; that he had sincerely endeavoured to perform his Duty, and to discharge those Trusts he had received, and he thanked God for the Satisfaction of it now, so much above what any thing else could administer to him. Thus dying with a quiet and serene Mind, he did humbly resign his Soul to God that gave it, which there is just reason to trust was received into a state of a most happy and joyful Eternity.

Then he enter'd on his great Reward, but left the Learned World destitute of one of its greatest Ornaments; the Church of a most vigilant and excellent Prelate; his Friends of a wise and faithful Counsellor, and his Children of a tender and careful Father; who by his prudent Advice and excellent Example, constantly made it his Business to promote their Welfare and Happiness.

He died at his House in *Park-Street, Westminster*, the 27th. Day of *March*, 1699, and from thence his Corps was carried to *Worcester*, and decently interred among his Predecessors behind the Choir in that Cathedral, in the same Grave where his late dear Consort was laid about two Years before. Near which, his Son, the Reverend Mr. *Stillingfleet* Canon of that Church, and Executor of his last Will, has erected an Elegant Monument, whereon is the following Inscription, written by the Learned Dr. *Bentley* his former Chaplain.

H. S. E.

*Edvardus Stillingfleet, S. T. P.*

*Ex Decano Ecclesiæ Paulinæ Episcopus Vigorniensis,*

*Jam tibi, quicumque hæc legis,  
Nisi & Europæ & Literati Orbis Hospes es,  
Ipse per se notus :*

*Dum Rebus Mortalibus interfuit,  
Et Sanctitate Morum, & Oris Staturæq; Dignitate,  
Et consummata Eruditionis Laude  
Undiq; venerandus.*

*Cui in Humanioribus Literis Critici, in Divinis Theologi,  
In Recondita Historia Antiquarii, in Scientiis Philosophi,  
In Legum Peritia Jurisconsulti, in Civili Prudentia Politici,  
In Eloquentia Universi,  
Fasces ultro submiserunt.*

*Major unus in his Omnibus, quam alii in Singulis.  
Ut Bibliothecam suam, cui parem Orbis vix habuit,  
Intra Pectus omnīs Doctrinæ capax  
Gestasse integram visus sit ;*

*Quæ tamen nullos Libros noverat meliores,  
Quam quos ipse multos scripsit ediditque  
Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ Defensor semper Inviçtus.*

*Natus est Cranborniæ in Agro Dorsettensi,  
XVII Aprilis M DC XXXV, Patre Samuele Generoso.  
In Matrimonio habuit Andream Gulielmi Dobbyns Gen. Filiam,  
Atque Ea defuncta,*

*Elizabetham Nicolai Pedley Equitis :  
Fæminas, quod unum dixisse satis est,  
Tanto Marito dignissimas.*

*Obiit Westmonasterii XXVII Martii M DC LXXXIX.  
Vixit Annos LXIII, Menses undecim.*

*Tres Liberos reliquit sibi superstites,  
Ex Priore Conjugio Edvardum, ex Secundo Jacobum & Annam :  
Quorum Jacobus Collegii hujus Cathedralis Canonicus  
Patri Optimo Benemerenti  
Monumentum hoc poni curavit.*

A

# CATALOGUE

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The Names of as many Subscribers  
as came to our Hands.

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# SERMON I.

Preached at

St. Margarets Westminster,

Before the Honourable

House of Commons;

October 10th. 1666.

Being a Fast-Sermon for the Fire of LONDON.

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A M O S IV. II.

*I have overthrowen some of you, as God overthrowed Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand pluckt out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.*

**I**T is but a very little time since you met together in this place to lament the remainders of a *raging pestilence*, which the last year destroyed so many thousand Inhabitants of the late great and famous City: And now God hath given us another sad occasion for our *fasting and humiliation*, by suffering a *devouring fire* to break forth and consume so many of her Habitations. As though the infected Air had been too kind and partial, and like *Saul* to the *Amalekites*, had only destroyed *the vile and refuse*, and spared *the greatest of the people*; as though the grave had surfeited with the bodies of the dead and were loth to go in the execution of *God's displeasure*; he hath employ'd a more furious Element, which by its merciless and devouring flames might in a more lively manner represent unto us the *kindling* of his *wrath* against us. And that by a *Fire*, which began with that violence, and spread with that horror, and raged with that fury, and continued for so long a time with that irresistible force, that it might justly fill the beholders with confusion, the hearers of it with amazement, and all of us with a deep and humble sense of those sins which have brought down the Judgments of *God* in so severe a manner in the midst of us.

For whatever arguments or reasons we can imagine that should compose the minds of men to a sense of their own or others calamities, or excite them to an apprehension of the *wrath of God* as the cause of them, or quicken them to an earnest supplication to him for mercy, they do

all eminently concurr in the sad occasion of this days solemnity. For if either compassion would move, or fear awaken, or interest engage us to any of these, it is hard to conceive there should be an instance of a more efficacious nature, than that is which we this day bewail: For who can behold the ruins of so great a City, and not have his bowels of compassion moved towards it? Who can have any sence of the anger of God discovered in it, and not have his fear awakened by it? Who can (as we ought all) look upon it as a judgment of universal influence on the whole Nation, and not think himself concerned to implore the mercy of Heaven towards us? For certainly, howsoever we may vainly flatter and deceive our selves, these are no common indications of the frowns of Heaven; nor are they meerly intended as the expressions of *God's* severity towards that City which hath suffered so much by them; but the strokes which fall upon the head (though they light upon that only) are designed for the punishment of the whole Body.

Were there nothing else but a bare permission of Divine Providence as to these things, we could not reasonably think, but that *God* must needs be very angry with us, when he suffers two such dreadful calamities to tread almost upon each others heels; that no sooner had *death* taken away such multitudes of our Inhabitants, but a *Fire* follows it to consume our Habitations. A *Fire*, so dreadful in its appearance, in its rage and fury, and in all the dismal consequences of it (which we cannot yet be sufficiently apprehensive of) that on that very account we  
 \*Lam. 2. may justly \* *lie down in our shame, and our confusion cover us*: because  
 1. *God hath covered the Daughter of Sion with a Cloud in his Anger, and cast down from Heaven to Earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger.* For such was the violence of the fury of the flames, that they have not only defaced the beauty of the City, and humbled the pride and grandeur of it; not only stained its glory, and consumed its Palaces; but have made the Houses of *God* themselves a heap of ruins, and a spectacle of desolation.

And what then can we propose to our selves as arguments of *God's* severe displeasure against us, which we have not either already felt, or have just cause to fear are coming upon us without a speedy and sincere amendment? If a Sword abroad and Pestilence at home, if Fire in our Houses and Death in our Streets, if Foreign Wars and Domestick Factions, if a languishing State and a discontented People, if the ruins of the City and poverty of the Country, may make us sensible how sad our condition at present is, how much worse it may be (if *God* in his mercy prevent it not) we shall all surely think we have reason enough this day to lay to heart *the evil of our doings which have brought all these things upon us, and abhor our selves, repenting in dust and ashes.* That would seem indeed to bear some analogy with the present ruins of the City, and the Calamities we lie under at this time; but *God* will more easily dispense with the pompous shews and solemn garbs of our humiliation; if our hearts bleed within for our former impieties, and our Repentance discovers its sincerity, by bringing us to that temper; that, *though we have done iniquity, we will do so no more.* That is the true and proper end, which *Almighty God* aims at, in all his Judgments: He takes no delight in hurling the World into confusions, and turning Cities into ruinous heaps, and making whole Countries a desolation: but when he sees it necessary to vindicate the Honour of his Justice to the World,  
 he



he doth it with that *severity* that may make us apprehend his displeasure, and yet with that *mercy* which may encourage us to repent and *return unto the Lord*. Thus we find in the instances recorded in the Text, when some *Cities* were *consumed by him*; so that as far as concerned them, they were made *like to Sodom and Gomorrah*: yet he doth it with that kindness to the *Inhabitants*, that *they are pluckt as firebrands out of the burning*: and therefore he looks upon it as a frustrating the design both of his *Justice* and of his *Mercy*, when he is fain to conclude with that sad reflection on their incorrigibleness; *Yet have ye not returned unto me saith the Lord*. Thus ye see what the design and scope of the words is, which I have read unto you, wherein we may consider,

1. The severity of the Judgment which God was pleased to execute upon them. *I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah*.

2. The mixture of his mercy in the midst of his severity, *and ye were as firebrands pluckt out of the Burning*.

3. The incorrigibleness of the People notwithstanding both. *Yet have ye not, &c.* In the first we have *God's Rod* lifted up to *strike*, in the second we have *Gods Hand* stretched out to *save*, yet neither of these would make them sensible of their disobedience; though their *Cities* were *overthrown for their sakes*, though they themselves escaped not *for their own sakes*, but for his *mercies sake* only whom they had so highly provoked; *yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord*. I am sure I may say of the two former parts of the Text, as our *Saviour* doth in another Case, *This day hath this Scripture been fulfilled among you*; we have seen a sad instance of *God's severity*, a *City* almost wholly *consumed as Sodom and Gomorrah*, and a great expression of his kindness, *the Inhabitants saved, as firebrands pluckt out of the burning*: O let it never be said that the last part of the words is fulfilled too, *Yet have ye not returned unto me, &c.* which, that it may not be, I shall first consider *the severity of God in his Judgment* this day, and then discover *the mixture of his kindness with it*, and the result of both will be the *unreasonableness of obstinate disobedience* after them.

1. *The severity of his judgment* here expressed: which, though we take it not in reference to the persons of men, but to the *Cities* wherein they dwelt: as it seems to be understood not only by the *Original* wherein the words relating to persons are left out; but by the following clause, expressing their preservation: yet we shall find the Judgment to be severe enough, in regard, 1. Of the *nature and kind* of it. 2. The *series and order* of it. 3. The *causes* moving to it. 4. The *Author* of it. *I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew, &c.*

1. *The nature and kind of it*: We can imagine nothing more severe when we consider what it is set forth by, the most unparalleled Judgment we read of, *viz. the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* by a fire from Heaven. Although in all circumstances the instance might not come up to the parallel, yet in several respects there might be so sad a desolation, that any other example but that might fall beneath the greatness and severity of it. And we may better understand of how sad and dreadful a nature such a Judgment must be, if we consider it with relation to the *suddenness and unexpectedness* of it, to the *force and violence* of it, and to all that *sad train of circumstances* which attend and follow it.

1. *The suddenness and unexpectedness* of it; as *God* overthrew *Sodom and Gomorrah*, i. e. when they least of all looked for such a desolation. For thus it was in the days of *Lot* (as our *Saviour* tells us) \*they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that *Lot* went out of *Sodom*, it rained fire and brimstone from *Heaven*, and destroyed them all. They were all immersed either in their pleasures or in their business, they little thought of destruction being so near them as it proved to be: Thus it was with the *Jews* in their first and latter destruction both of their *City* and *Country*, they were as high and as confident of the contrary, as might be to the very last; nothing could persuade them that their *Temple* or their *City* should be burnt with *Fire*; till they saw them flaming before their eyes. Thus *Josephus* observes of his Countrymen, that in the midst of all their miseries they had no kind of sence at all of their sins, but were as proud, presumptuous and arrogant, as if all things went well with them; and were like to do so. They thought *God* could not possibly punish such a people as they were in such a manner; they could easily have believed it of any other people but themselves: but that *God* should punish his own people in *Covenant* with him, that *Judgment* should begin at the house of *God*, that they who had loved to be called by his Name, should be made examples to all other Nations; this seemed so harsh and incredible that by no means could they entertain it. But *God* and wise men too thought otherwise of them than they did of themselves: they could not but see an outward shew of Religion joyned with a deep and subtil hypocrisie; there being among them an heap of pride and luxury, of fraud and injustice, of sedition and faction gilded over with a fair shew of greater zeal for *God* and his *Glory*: which that impartial Historian (as one who knew them well) hath described at large: and although they could not believe that such heavy *Judgments* should befall them, yet others did not only believe, but tremble at the apprehensions of them:

\* *Hy* ἡδ' αὐ-  
 τῶν μετὰ  
 νοῖα μὲν  
 ἐδραμῖα ἔβ  
 χαλῶν, ἀ-  
 λαζωνεῖα  
 ἢ ὡς ἐπ'  
 ἀγαθῶν.  
 de bell.  
 Jud. l. 7. c.  
 14.

Who among all the *Citizens* of *London* could have been persuaded, but the day before the *Fire* brake out, nay when they saw the *Flames* for near a day together, that ever in four days time, not a fourth part of the *City* should be left standing? For when were they ever more secure and inapprehensive of their danger than at this time? they had not been long returned to their Houses, which the *Plague* had driven them from, and now they hoped to make some amends for the loss of their *Trade* before; but they returned home with the same sins they carried away with them; like new *Moons*, they had a new face and appearance, but the same spots remained still: or it may be, increased by that *scum* they had gathered in the *Countries* were they had been. Like *Beasts* of prey that had been chained up so long till they were hunger-bitten, when they once got loose they ran with that violence and greediness to their ways of gain, as though nothing could ever satisfy them. But that which betrayed them to so much security, was their late deliverance from so sweeping a *Judgment* as the *Plague* had been to the *City* and *Suburbs* of it: they could by no means think, when they had all so lately escaped the *Grave*, that the *City* it self should be so near buried in its own ruins; that the *Fire* which had missed their *Blood*, should seize upon their Houses; that there should be no other way to purge the infected *Air*, but by the *Flames* of the whole *City*. Thus when the *Mariners* have newly escaped a wreck at *Sea*, the fears of which have a long time deprived them of their wonted rest, they think they may

may securely lie down and sleep, till it may be another storm overtake and sink them. We see then there is neither piety nor wisdom in so much security when a great danger is over, for we know not but that very security it self may provoke God to send a greater. And no kind of Judgments are so dreadful and amazing, as those which come most unexpectedly upon men; for these betray the succours which reason offers, they infatuate mens councils, weaken their courage, and deprive them of that presence of Mind which is necessary at such a time for their own and the Publick Interest. And there needs no more to let us know how severe such a Judgment must be, when it comes upon men in so sudden and unexpected a manner; but that is not all, for the severity of it lies further.

2. *In the force and violence of it*: and surely that was very great which consumed four Cities to nothing in so short a time, when God did *pluere Gehennam de Caelo*, as one expresses it, rained down *Hell-fire* upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And this is that which some think is called the \* *vengeance of eternal fire, which all those in Sodom and Gomorrah* \* Jud. 7: *are said to suffer*; i. e. a Fire which consumed, till there was nothing left to be consumed by it. Not but that those wicked persons did justly suffer the *vengeance of an eternal fire* in another life, but the *Apostle* seems to set out and paint forth to us that in the life to come, by the force and violence of that *fire* which destroyed those Cities; and it would be harsh to say, that all who were involved in that common calamity (who yet were innocent as to the great abominations of those places, *viz. the Infants* there destroyed) must be immediately sentenced to eternal misery. But although God since that perpetual monument of his justice in the destruction of those Cities hath not by such an immediate fire from Heaven consumed and razed out the very foundations of other Cities; yet at sometimes there are *fires* which break out and rage with a more than ordinary violence, and will not yield to those attempts for quenching them, which at other times may be attended with great success. Such might that great fire in *Rome* be in *Nero's* time, which whether begun *casually*, or by *design* (which was disputed then, as it hath been about others since) did presently spread it self with greater speed over the *Cirque* (as the † *Historian* tells us) than the *Wind* it self, and never left burning, till of fourteen *Regions* in *Rome*, but four were left intire. Such might that be in the *Emperour Titus* his time, which lasted three days and nights, and was so irresistible in its fury, that the *Historian* tells us, *it was certainly more than an ordinary fire*. Such might that be in the same City in the time of *Commodus*, which though all the art and industry imaginable were used for the quenching it, yet it burnt till it consumed, besides the fairest Houses and Palaces of the City, which on that account, the *Historians* attribute to more than natural Causes. Such might that be (which comes the nearest of any I have met with to that *Fire* we this day lament the effects of) I mean that at *Constantinople*, which happened || *A. D. 465*. in the beginning of *September*; it brake forth by the water side, and raged with that horrible fury for four days together, that it burnt down the greatest part of the City, and was so little capable of resistance that as \* *Evagrius* tells us, the strongest Houses were

† *Tacit.*  
An. 15.  
Τῷ τὸ τε τὸ κακὸν ἐκ ἀνδραπίον ἀλλὰ  
δαυμόνιον ἔγενετο. Xiphil. in Epit. Di-  
on. in Tito, p. 227.

Temple of Peace, the

Ἐὸθεν καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἔργον ἐξέθειδεν, π-  
σεύοντων κατ' ἐκείνη καίρις ὅτι τότε  
ἀνδραπίον, ὅτι γνώμη θεῶν καὶ δυναμει  
ἤρξατο τε τὸ πῦρ καὶ ἀπαύσατο. Herodi-  
an. in Commod. hist. l. 1. p. 22. v. Xi-  
phil. ad fin. Commodi.

|| *Niceph.* l. 15. c. 21.

\* *Evagr.*  
I. 2. c. 13.  
but

but ὡς πῆρ π φεβραϊστικῶδες, like so much dried stubble before it, by which means the whole City was, as he calls it, οὐκ ἐβότατον θεῶμα, a most miserable and doleful spectacle; so that as \* *Baronius* expresses it, that City which before was accounted the wonder of the World, was made like unto Sodom and Gomorrah. Such likewise might those two great Fires have been which have formerly burnt down great part of the then City of London; but neither of them come near to the dreadfulnes of this, considering how much bigger the habitations of the City were now, and how much greater the riches of it than could be imagined at those times. How great must we conceive the force of this Fire to have been, which having at first gotten a head where there were little means of resisting it, and much fuel to encrease it; from thence it spread it self both with and against the Wind; till it had gained so considerable a force, that it despised all the resistance could be made by the strength of the buildings which stood in its way; and when it had once subdued the strongest and the tallest of them, it then roared like the waves of the Sea, and made its way through all the lesser obstacles, and might have gone on so far, till it had laid this City level with the ruins of the other, had not he who sets the bounds to the Ocean, and saith, *thus far shalt thou go and no farther*, put a stop to it in those places which were as ready to have yielded up themselves to the rage of it, as any which had been consumed before.

3. The severity of it will yet more appear from all the dreadful circumstances which attend and follow it. Could you suppose your selves in the midst of those Cities which were consumed by Fire from Heaven, when it had seized upon their dwellings, O what cries and lamentations, what yellings and shriekings might ye then have heard among them! We may well think how dreadful those were, when we do but consider how sad the circumstances were of the Fire we mourn for this day. When it began like *Sampson* to break in pieces all the means of resisting it, and carried before it not only the Gates but the Churches and most Magnificent Structures of the City, what horror and confusion may we then imagine had seized upon the spirits of the Citizens; what distraction in their Councils, what paleness in their Countenances, what pantings at their Hearts, what an universal consternation might have been then seen upon the Minds of Men? But O the sighs and tears, the frights and amazements, the miscarriages, nay the Deaths of some of the weaker Sex at the terror and apprehension of it! O the hurry and useles pains, the alarms and tumults, the mutual hinderances of each other that were among Men at the beholding the rage and fury of it! There we might have seen Women weeping for their Children, for fear of their being trod down in the press, or lost in the crowd of People, or exposed to the violence of the flames; Husbands more solicitous for the safety of their Wives and Children, than their own; the Soldiers running to their Swords, when there was more need of Buckets; the Tradesmen loading their backs with that which had gotten possession of their Hearts before. Then we might have heard some complaining thus of themselves: O that I had been as careful of laying up treasures in Heaven, as I have been upon Earth, I had not been under such fears of losing them as now I am! If I had served God as faithfully as I have done the World, he would never have left me as now that is like to do. What a fool have I been which have spent all my precious time for the gaining of that which may now be

lost in an hour's time! If these flames be so dreadful, what are those which are reserved for them who love the World more than God! If none can come near the heat of his Fire, who can dwell with *everlasting burnings*! O what madness then will it be to sin any more wilfully against that God who is a *consuming Fire*, infinitely more dreadful than this can be! Farewel then all ye deceitful vanities: now I understand thee and my self better, O bewitching World, than to fix my happiness in thee any more. I will henceforth learn so much wisdom to lay up my treasures there where neither moths can corrupt them, nor Thieves steal them, nor fire consume them. O how happy would *London* be, if this were the effect of her flames on the minds of all her Inhabitants! She might then rise with a greater glory, and her inward beauty would outshine her outward splendour, let it be as great as we can wish or imagine.

But in the mean time who can behold her present ruins, without paying some tears as due to the sadness of the spectacle, and more to the sins which caused them? If that City were able to speak out of its ruins, what sad complaints would it make of all those impieties which have made her so miserable. If it had not been (might she say) for the pride and luxury, the ease and delicacy of some of my Inhabitants, the covetousness, the fraud, the injustice of others, the debaucheries of the prophanes, the open factions and secret hypocrisie of too many pretending to greater sanctity, my *beauty* had not been thus *turned into ashes*, nor my glory into those ruins which make my enemies rejoice, my friends to mourn, and all stand amazed at the beholding of them. Look now upon me, you who so lately admired the greatness of my Trade, the riches of my Merchants, the number of my People, the conveniency of my Churches, the multitude of my Streets, and see what desolations sin hath made in the Earth. Look upon me, and then tell me whether it be nothing to dally with Heaven, to make a mock at sin, to slight the Judgments of God, and abuse his Mercies, and after all the attempts of Heaven to reclaim a people from their sins, to remain still the same that ever they were? Was there no way to expiate your guilt but by my misery? Had the *Leprosie* of your sins so fretted in my Walls, that there was no cleansing them, but by the flames which consume them? Must I mourn in *my dust and ashes* for your iniquities, while you are so ready to return to the practice of them? Have I suffered so much by reason of *them*, and do you think to escape your selves? Can you then look upon my ruins with hearts as hard and unconcerned as the *stones* which lie in them? If you have any kindness for me, or for your selves, if you ever hope to see my breaches repaired, my beauty restored, my glory advanced, look on *London's* ruins and *repent*. Thus would she bid her Inhabitants not weep for her miseries, but for their own sins; for if *never any sorrow was like to her sorrow*, it is because never any sins were like to their sins. Not as though they were only the sins of the City, which have brought this Evil upon her, no, but as far as the judgment reaches, so great hath the compass of the sins been which have provoked God to make her an example of his justice. And I fear the effects of *London's* calamity will be felt all the Nation over. For, considering the present languishing condition of this Nation, it will be no easie matter to recover the *Blood and Spirits* which have been lost by this *Fire*. So that whether we consider the sadness of those circumstances which accompanied the rage of the fire, or those which respect the present miseries of the City, or the general influence

influence those will have upon the Nation, we cannot easily conceive what judgment could in so *critical* a time have befallen us, which had been more severe for the *kind* and *nature* of it, than this hath been.

2. We consider it *in the series and order of it*. We see by the *Text*, this comes in the last place, as a reserve, when nothing else would do any good upon them: It is *extrema medicina*, as \* *St. Hierom* saith, the last attempt that *God* uses to reclaim a people by, and if these *Causticks* will not do, it is to be feared he looks upon the wounds as incurable. He had sent a *famine* before, *v. 6.* a *drought*, *v. 7, 8.* *blasting and mildew*, *v. 9.* *the Pestilence after the manner of Ægypt*, *v. 10.* *the miseries of War*, in the same *verse*. And when none of these would work that effect upon them, which they were designed for, then he comes to this last way of punishing before a final destruction, *he overthrew some of their Cities as he had overthrown Sodom and Gomorrah*. *God* forbid, we should be so near a final subversion, and utter desolation, as the Ten Tribes were when none of these things would bring them to repentance; but yet the method *God* hath used with us seems to *bode* very ill in case we do not at last *return to the Lord*. For it is not only agreeable to what is here delivered as the course *God* used to reclaim the *Israelites*, but to what is reported by the most faithful *Historian* of those times of the degrees and steps that *God* made before the ruins of the *British Nation*. For † *Gildas* tells us the decay of it began by *Civil Wars* among themselves, and *high discontents* remaining as the consequents of them; after this an *universal decay and poverty* among them; after that, nay during the continuance of it, *Wars* with the *Picts* and *Scots* their inveterate Enemies; but no sooner had they a little breathing space but they return to their luxury and other sins again; then *God* sends among them a *consuming Pestilence*, which destroyed an incredible number of people. When all this would not do, those whom they trusted most to, betrayed them, and rebelled against them, by whose means, not only *the Cities were burnt with fire*, but the whole *Island* was turned almost into *one continued flame*. The issue of all which at last was, that their *Country* was turned to a desolation, the *Ancient Inhabitants* driven out, or destroyed, and their former servants, but now their bitter enemies, *possessing* their *habitations*. May *God* avert the *Omen* from us at this day. We have smarted by *Civil Wars*, and the dreadful *effects* of them; we yet complain of *great discontents* and *poverty* as great as them, we have *inveterate enemies* combin'd abroad against us, we have very lately suffered under a *Pestilence* as great almost as any we read of, and now the *great City* of our *Nation* burnt down by a *dreadful fire*. And what do all these things mean? and what will the issue of them be? though that be lockt up in the *Councils of Heaven*, yet we have just cause to fear, if it be not our speedy amendment, it may be our ruine. And they who think that incredible, let them tell me whether two years since, they did not think it altogether as improbable, that in the compass of the two succeeding years, above a *hundred thousand persons* should be destroyed by the *Plague* in *London* and other places, and the *City* it self should be burnt to the *Ground*? And if our *fears* do not, I am sure our *sins* may tell us, that these are but the fore-runners of greater calamities, in case there be not a timely reformation of our selves. And although *God* may give us some intermissions of punishments, yet at last he may, as the *Roman Consul* expressed it, pay us *intercalatæ pœnæ usuram*, that which may make

amends

\* Hierom  
in loc.

† Gildas  
de Excid.  
Brit.

amends for all his abatements, and give us full measure according to that of our sins, *pressed down, shaken together, and running over.* Which leads to the third particular.

3. *The Causes moving God to so much severity in his Judgments,* which are the greatness of the *sins* committed against him. So this *Prophet* tells us, that the true account of all *Gods* punishments is to be fetched from the *sins* of the people, Amos 1. 3. *For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof:* so it is said of *Gaza*, v. 6. of *Tyrus*, v. 9. of *Edom*, v. 11. of *Ammon*, v. 13. *Moab*, ch. 2. 1. *Judah*, v. 4. and at last *Israel*, v. 6. And it is observable of every one of these, that when *God* threatens to punish them for the greatness of their *iniquities*, and the multitude of their *transgressions*, (which is generally supposed to be meant by the *three transgressions and the four*.) he doth particularly threaten to send a *fire* among them to consume the Houses and the Palaces of their Cities. So to *Damascus*, ch. 1. 4. to *Gaza*, v. 7. to *Tyrus*, v. 10. to *Edom*, v. 12. to *Ammon*, v. 14. to *Moab*, ch. 2. v. 2. to *Judah*, v. 5. *I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the Palaces of Jerusalem:* and *Israel* in the words of the text. This is a Judgment then, which when it comes in its *fury*, gives us notice to how great a height our *sins* are risen: especially when it hath so many dreadful forerunners, as it had in *Israel*, and hath had among our selves. When the *red horse* hath marched furiously before it all bloody with the effects of a *Civil War*, and the *pale horse* hath followed after the other with *Death* upon his back, and the *Grave* at his heels, and after both these, those come, *out of whose mouth issues fire and smok, and brimstone*, it is then time for the inhabitants of the earth, to *repent of the work of their hands*. But it is our great unhappiness, that we are apt to impute these great calamities to any thing rather than to our *sins*, and thereby we hinder our selves from the true remedy, because we will not understand the cause of our distemper. Though *God* hath not sent *Prophets* among us, to tell us for such and such *sins*, I will send such and such judgments upon you, yet where we observe the parallel between the *sins* and the *punishments* agreeable with what we find recorded in *Scripture*, we have reason to say, that those *sins* were not only the *antecedents*, but the *causes* of those punishments which followed after them. And that because the reason of punishment was not built upon any particular relation between *God* and the people of *Israel*, but upon reasons common to all Mankind: yet with this difference, that the greater the mercies were which any people enjoyed, the sooner was the measure of their *iniquities* filled up, and the severer were the judgments when they came upon them. This our *Prophet* gives an account of, Chapter 3. 2. *You only have I known of all the Nations of the Earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities.* So did *God* punish *Tyre* and *Damascus*, as well as *Israel* and *Judah*; but his meaning is, he would punish them sooner, he would punish them more severely. I wish we could be brought once to consider what influence *piety* and *virtue* hath upon the good of a Nation, if we did, we should not only live better our selves, but our *Kingdom* and *Nation* might flourish more than otherwise we are like to see it do. Which is a truth hath been so universally received among the wise Men of all ages, that one of the *Roman Historians*, though of no very severe life himself; yet imputes the decay of the *Roman State*, not to Chance or Fortune, or some unhidden causes (which the *Atheists* of our Age would presently do) but to the general looseness of mens

lives, and corruption of their manners. And it was the grave Observation of one of the bravest \* *Captains* ever the Roman State had, that  
 \* *Scipio apud Aug. de Civ. D.* it was impossible for any State to be happy, *stantibus mœnibus, ruentibus moribus*, though their walls were firm, if their manners were decayed. But it is our misery, that our walls and our manners are fallen together, or rather the latter undermined the former. They are our *sins* which have drawn so much of our blood, and infected our air, and added the greatest fuel to our flames.

But it is not enough in general to declaim against our *sins*, but we must search out particularly those predominant vices which by their *boldness* and *frequency* have provoked God thus to punish us; and as we have hitherto observed a parallel between the *Judgments* of *Israel* in this Chapter, and our *own*; so I am afraid we shall find too sad a parallel between *their sins* and *ours* too. Three sorts of *sins* are here spoken of in a peculiar manner, as the causes of their severe punishments: Their *luxury and intemperance*, their *covetousness and oppression*, and their *contempt of God and his Laws*; and I doubt we need not make a very exact *scrutiny* to find out these in a high degree among our selves; and I wish it were as easie to reform them, as to find them out.

1. *Luxury and intemperance*; that we meet with in the first verse, both in the compellation, *Ye Kine of Bashan*, and in their behaviour, *which say to their Masters, bring and let us drink. Ye Kine of Bashan, Loquitur ad Principes Israel, & Optimates quosque decem Tribuum*, saith St. *Hierom*, he speaks to the *Princes of Israel*, and the chief of all the ten Tribes; Those which are fed in the richest pastures, such as those of *Bashan* were. Who are more fully described by the *Prophet* in this sixth Chapter. They are the men *who are at ease in Sion*, v. 1. *they put far away from them the evil day*, v. 3. *they lie upon beds of Ivory, and stretch themselves upon their Couches, and eat the Lambs out of the flock, and the Calves out of the midst of the stall*, v. 4. *they chaunt to the sound of the Viol, and invent to themselves instruments of Musick like David*, v. 5. *they drink Wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief oyntments, but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph*. The meaning of all which is, they minded nothing but ease, softness and pleasure, but could not endure to hear of the calamities which were so near them. Nothing but mirth and jollity, and riot, and feasting, and evil consequences of these were to be seen or heard among them. Their delicate souls were presently ruffled and disturbed at the discourse of any thing but matters of courtship, address and entertainment. Any thing that was grave and serious; though never so necessary, and of the greatest importance, was put off, as *Felix* put off *St. Paul*, to a more convenient time: especially if it threatned miseries to them, and appeared with a countenance sadder than their own. These were the *Kine of Bashan*, who were full of ease and wantonness, and never thought of the *day of slaughter*, which the other were the certain fore-runner of. *Symachus* renders it, *αἱ βόες ἐν τροφαῖς*, which others apply to the *Rich Citizens of Samaria*; I am afraid we may take it in either sense without a *Solacism*. *Bring and let us drink*, which as *St. Hierom* goes on, *Ebrietatem significat in vino & luxuria quæ statum mentis evertunt*, it implies the height of their *luxury and intemperance*. It is observed by some, that our *Prophet* retains still the language of his education in the bluntness of his expressions, the great men that lived wholly at their ease, in wantonness and luxury, he styles like the *beardsmen of Tekoa*, the *Kine of Bashan*. That he thought was  
 title



title good enough for such who seemed to have *souls* for no other end, than the other had. And hath not that *delicata insania*, as St. *Austin* calls it, that soft and effeminate kind of madness taken possession of too many among us, whose birth and education designed them for more manly employments? Yea, what an age of *Luxury* do we live in, when instead of those noble characters of men from their virtue, and wisdom, and courage, it is looked on among some as a mighty character of a person, that *he eats and drinks well*: a character that becomes none so much as the *Kine of Bashan* in the literal sense, for surely they did so, or else they had never been in so great esteem among the *heardsmen* of *Tekoa*. A character which those *Philosophers* would have been ashamed of, who looked upon no other end of humane life but *pleasure*: But in order to that, they thought nothing more necessary than *temperance* and *sobriety*; but whatever esteem they had then, they have lost all their reputation among our modern *Epicures*, who know of no such things as *pleasures of the mind*, and would not much value whether they had any *faculties* of the *mind* or no, unless it were for the contrivance of new Oaths and Debaucheries. But if this were only among some few persons, we hope the whole Nation would not suffer for their madness: for scarce any Age hath been so happy, but it hath had some *Monsters* in *Morality* as well as *Nature*. But I am afraid these vices are grown too *Epidemical*; not only in the *City*, but the *Countries* too; what mean else those frequent complaints (and I hope more general than the causes of them) that the Houses of *great men* in too many places are so near being *publick Schools* of *debauchery*, rather than of *piety* and *virtue*, where men shall not want instructors to teach them to *forget* both *God* and *themselves*; wherein *sobriety* is so far from being accounted a matter of *honour*, that the rules of the *Persian* civility are quite forgotten, and *men* are forced to *unman* themselves. I know nothing would tend more to the honour of our Nation, or the advantage of it, than if once these publick excesses were severely restrained: I do not mean so much by making new *Laws*, (for those generally do but exercise peoples Wits by finding out new evasions) but by executing old ones.

2. *Covetousness and Oppression*. You see what these great men in *Samaria* did when they had any respite from their excesses and intemperance, then woe be to the poor who come in their way; *Which oppresses the poor, and crush the needy*, v. 1. either by the hands of violence, or by those arts and devices which either their honesty or poverty have kept them from the knowledge of. And if there be not so much of open violence in our days, the thanks are due to the care of our *Magistrates*, and the severity of our *Laws*, but it is hard to say whether ever any Age produced more studious and skilful to pervert the design of *Laws*, without breaking the letter of them, than this of ours hath done. Fraud and Injustice is now manag'd with a great deal of artifice and cunning; and he thinks himself no body in the understanding of the World, that cannot over-reach his Brother, and not be discovered: Or however in the multiplicity and obscurity of our *Laws*, cannot find out something in pretence at least to justify his actions by: But if appeal be made to the *Court of Judicature*, what arts are then used either for concealing or hiring Witnesses, so that if their Purses be not equal, the adverse party may over swear him by so much as his Purse is weightier than the others. I heartily wish it may never be said of us,

\* Cicero.  
pro Flacco.

what the Orator once said of the Greeks, \* *Quibus jus jurandum jocus, testimonium ludus*, they made it a matter of jest and drollery to forswear themselves, and give false testimonies. But supposing men keep within the bounds of justice and common honesty, yet how unsatiable are the desires of men! they are for adding *house to house*, and *land to land*, never contented with what either their Ancestors have left them, or the bountiful Hand of Heaven hath bestowed upon them. Till at last it may be in the Prophets expression for their covetousness, † *the stone cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber answer it*; i. e. provoke God to give a severe check to the exorbitant and boundless desire of Men, as he hath done by this days calamity. Thus while the City thought with

† Heb. 21.

|| Isa. 47.  
7, 8, 11.

|| *Babylon to sit as a Lady for ever, while she dwelt carelessly, and said I am, and there is none else beside me; evil is come upon her, and she knows not from whence it comes, and mischief is fallen upon her, and she hath not been able to put it off, and desolation is come upon her suddenly, which she did not foresee.*

3. *Contempt of God and his Laws.* That we read of v. 4. where the Prophet speaks by an Irony to them, *Come to Bethel and transgress, &c.* He knew well enough they were resolved to do it, let God or the Prophet say what they pleased. For these *Kine of Bashan* were all for the *Calves of Dan and Bethel*, and some think that is the reason of the title that is given them. These great men of *Samaria* thought it beneath them to own *Religion* any further than it was subservient to their civil interests. They were all of *Jeroboams Religion*, who looked on it as a meer *politick thing*, and fit to advance his own designs by. I am afraid there are too many at this day who are secretly of his mind, and think it a piece of *wisdom* to be so: *Blessed God*, that men should be so wise to deceive themselves, and go down with so much discretion to Hell! These are the grave and retired *Atheists*, who, though they secretly love not *Religion*, yet their caution hinders them from talking much against it. But there is a sort of men much more common than the other; the faculties of whose minds are so thin and airy, that they will not bear the consideration of any thing, much less of *Religion*; these throw out their bitter scoffs, and prophane jests against it. A thing never permitted that I know of in any civilized Nation in the World; whatsoever their *Religion* was, the reputation of *Religion* was always preserved sacred: *God* himself (saith *Josephus*) would not suffer the *Jews* to speak evil of other *Gods*, though they were to destroy all those who tempted them to the worship of them. And shall we suffer the most excellent and reasonable *Religion* in the World, viz. the *Christian*, to be prophaned by the unhallowed mouths of any who will venture to be damned, to be accounted witty? If their enquiries were deeper, their reason stronger, or their arguments more perswasive, than of those who have made it their utmost care and business to search into these things, they ought to be allowed a fair hearing; but for men who pretend to none of these things, yet still to make *Religion* the object of their *scoffs* and *railery*, doth not become the gravity of a Nation professing wisdom to permit it, much less the sobriety of a people professing *Christianity*. In the mean time such persons may know, that wise men may be argued out of a *Religion* they own, but none but *Fools* and *Madmen* will be droll'd out of it. Let them first try whether they can laugh Men out of their Estates, before they attempt to do it out of their hopes of an *Eternal happiness*. And I am sure it will be no comfort to them

them in another world, that they were accounted *Wits* for deriding those miseries which they then feel and smart under the severity of: it will be no *mitigation* of their *flames* that they go *laughing* into them: nor will they endure them the better because they would not believe them. But while this is so prevailing a *humour* among the vain men of this Age and Nation, what can we expect but that *God* should by remarkable, and severe Judgments seek to make men more serious in *Religion*; or else make their *hearts to ake*, and their *joints to tremble*, as he did *Belshazzars*, when he could find nothing else to carouse in but the *Vessels* of the *Temple*? And when men said in the Prophet *Zephany*, chap. 1. 12. *That God neither did good nor evil*, presently it follows, \* *Therefore their* <sup>Zeph. 1.</sup> *Goods shall become a booty, and their Houses a desolation: The day of the* <sup>13, 14, 15:</sup> *Lord is near, a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation*; as it is with us at this time. Thus we see how sad the parallel hath been not only in the *judgments* of *Israel*, but in the *sins* likewise which have made those judgments so severe.

4. The severity of the Judgment appears not only from the *Causes*, but from the *Author* of it. *I have overthrown some of you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah*. *God* challenges the Execution of his Justice to himself, not only in the great day, but in his judgment here in the World. † *Shall there be evil in a City and the Lord hath not done it?* † *Amos* <sup>3. 6.</sup> When *God* is pleased to punish men for their sins, the execution of his justice is agreeable to his nature now, as it will be at the end of the World. We all know that he may do it if he please, and he hath told us, that *he doth* and *will do it*; and we know withal, that without such remarkable severities, the world will hardly be kept in any awe of him. We do not find that *Love* doth so much in the World as *Fear* doth, there being so very few persons of tractable and ingenuous spirits. It is true of too many, what || *Lactantius* observes of the *Romans*, *Nunquam Dei* || *Lact. 1.2;* *meminerunt nisi dum in malis sunt, they seldom think of God; but when they* <sup>c. 11.</sup> *are afraid of him*. And there is not only this reason as to particular persons why *God* should punish them, but there is a greater as to Communities, and Bodies of Men; for although *God* suffers wicked men to escape punishment here as he often doth, yet he is sure not to do it in the life to come; but Communities of men can neve be punished but in this World; and therefore the justice of *God* doth often discover it self in these common calamities, to keep the World in subjection to him, and to let men see that neither the *multitude* of their *Associates*, nor the *depth* of their *Designs*, nor the *subilty* of their *Councils* can secure them from the omnipotent arm of Divine Justice, when he hath determined to *visit their transgressions with rods*, and *their iniquities with stripes*. But when he doth all this, yet his *loving kindness* doth he not utterly take from them: for in the midst of all his Judgments he is pleased to remember *Mercy*; of which we have a remarkable instance in the Text, for when *God* was overthrowing Cities, yet *he pluckt the Inhabitants as fire-brands out of the burning*: and so I come from the severity of *God*,

2. To the mixture of his *Mercy* in it. *And ye were as a fire-brand pluckt out of the burning*. That notes two things, *the nearness they were in to the danger*, and *the unexpectedness of their deliverance out of it*.

1. *The nearness they were in to the danger, quasi torris cujus jam magna pars absumpta est*, as some *Pharaphrase* it, *like a brand, the greatest part of which is already consumed by Fire*; which shews the difficulty of their escaping. So *Joshua* is said to be a *brand pluckt out of the fire*, *Zach. 3. 2.*

And

And to this *St. Hierom* upon this place, applies that difficult passage, *1. Cor. 3. 15. They shall be saved, but so as by Fire*, noting the greatness of the danger they were in, and how hardly they should escape. And are not all the Inhabitants of this City, and all of us in the Suburbs of the other, whose houses escaped so near the flames, as *Fire-brands pluckt out of the burning*? When the fire came on in its rage and fury, as though it would in a short time have devoured all before it, that not only this whole City, but so great a part of the Suburbs of the other should escape untouched, is (all circumstances considered) a wonderful expression of the *kindness of God* to us in the midst of so much severity. If he had suffered the Fire to go on to have consumed the remainder of our Churches and Houses, and laid this City even with the other in one continued heap of ruins, we must have said, *Just art thou, O Lord, and righteous in all thy Judgments*. We ought rather to have admired his patience in sparing us so long, than complain of this rigour of his Justice in punishing us at last; but instead of that he hath given us occasion this day, with the *three Children* in the *fiery Furnace*, to praise him in the midst of the flames. For even the Inhabitants of London themselves who have suffered most in this calamity, have cause to acknowledge the *mercy of God* towards them, that they are escaped themselves though it be (as the Jews report of *Joshua the High-Priest*, when thrown into the fire by the *Chaldeans*) with *their cloaths burnt about them*. Though their habitations be consumed, and their losses otherwise may be too great, yet that in the midst of so much danger by the flames, and the press of people, so very few should suffer the loss of their lives, ought to be owned by them and us as a miraculous *Providence of God* towards them. And therefore *not unto us, not unto us, but to his holy Name be the praise of so great a preservation* in the midst of so heavy a Judgment.

2. *The unexpectedness of such a deliverance*; they are not saved by their own skill and counsel, nor by their strength and industry, but by him who by his mighty hand did pluck them as *fire-brands out of the burning*. Though we own the *justice of God* in the calamities of this day, let us not forget his *mercy* in what he hath unexpectedly rescued from the fury of the flames; that the *Royal Palaces* of our *Gracious Sovereign*, the *residence of the Nobility*, the *Houses of Parliament*, the *Courts of Judicature*, the place where we are now assembled, and several others of the same nature, with other places and habitations to receive those who were burnt out of their own, stand at this day untouched with the fire (and long may they continue so) ought chiefly to be ascribed to the *power and goodness of that God*, who not only commands the *raging of the Sea*, and the *madness of the People*, but whom the *winds* and the *flames* obey. Although enough in a due subordination to *Divine Providence* can never be attributed to the mighty care and industry of our most *Gracious Sovereign*, and his *Royal Highness*, who by their presence and encouragement inspired a new life and vigour into the sinking spirits of the *Citizens*, whereby *God* was pleased so far to succeed their endeavours, that a stop was put to the fury of the fire in such places where it was as likely to have prevailed, as in any parts of the City consumed by it.

O let us not then frustrate the design of so much severity mixed with so great mercy: let it never be said, that neither Judgments nor Kindness will work upon us: that neither our deliverance from the *Pestilence* which *walks in darkness*, nor from the *flames* which shine as the *noon-day*, will

will awaken us from that lethargy and security we are in by our sins: but let *God* take what course he pleases with us, we are the same incorrigible people still that ever we were. For we have cause enough for our mourning and lamentation this day, (if *God* had not sent new calamities upon us) that we were no better for those we had undergone before. We have surfeited with mercies, and grown sick of the kindness of Heaven to us; and when *God* hath made us smart for our fullness and wantonness; then we grew fullen and murmured and disputed against providence, and were willing to do any thing but repent of our sins, and reform our lives. It is not many years since *God* blessed us with great and undeserved blessings, which we then thought our selves very thankful for; but if we had been really so, we should never have provoked him who bestowed those favours upon us in so great a degree as we have done since. Was this our requital to *him* for restoring our *Sovereign*, to rebel the more against Heaven? Was this our thankfulness, for removing the *disorders* of *Church* and *State*, to bring them into our *lives*? Had we no other way of trying the continuance of *God's goodness* to us, but by exercising his patience by our greater provocations? As though we had resolved to let the World see, there could be a more unthankful and disobedient people than the *Jews* had been. Thus we sinned with as much security and confidence, as though we had blinded the eyes, or bribed the justice, or commanded the power of Heaven. When *God* of a sudden like one highly provoked drew forth the sword of his destroying *Angel*, and by it cut off so many thousands in the midst of us: Then we fell upon our knees and begged the Mercy of Heaven, that our lives might be spared, that we might have time to amend them: but no sooner did our fears abate, but our devotion did so too, we had soon forgotten the promises we made in the day of our distress, and I am afraid it is at this day too true of us which is said in the *Revelations* of those who had escaped the several plagues which so many had been destroyed by. \* *And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the work of their hands.* For if we had not greedily sucked in again the poyson, we had only laid down while we were begging for our lives; if we had not returned with as great fury and violence as ever to our former lusts, the removing of one Judgment had not been as it were only to make way for the coming on of another. For the *grave* seemed to close up her mouth, and *death* by degrees to withdraw himself, that the *Fire* might come upon the *Stage*, to act its part too in the *Tragedy* our sins have made among us; and I pray *God* this may be the last *Act* of it. Let us not then provoke *God* to find out new methods of vengeance, and make experiments upon us of what other unheard of severities may do for our cure. But let us rather meet *God* now by our repentance, and returning to him, by our serious humiliation for our former sins, and our stedfast resolutions to return no more to the practice of them. That, that much more dangerous *infection* of our souls may be cured as well as that of our bodies, that the impure *flames* which burn within may be extinguished, that all our *luxuries* may be retrenched, our debaucheries punished, our vanities taken away, our careless indifferency in Religion turned into a greater seriousness both in profession and the practice of it. So will *God* make us a happy and prosperous, when he finds us a more righteous and holy Nation. So will *God* succeed all your endeavours for the honour and interest of that people whom you represent. So may he add that other

Title to the rest of those you have deserved for your Countries good, to make you *Repairers of the breaches of the City* as well as of the *Nation*, and *Restorers of paths to dwell in* : So may that *City* which now sits solitary like a *Widow*, have her tears wiped off, and her beauty and comeliness restored unto her. Yea, so may her present ruines, in which she now lies *buried*, be only the fore-runners of a more joyful *resurrection*. In which, though the *Body* may remain the *same*, the *qualities* may be so altered, that its present desolation may be the only putting off its former inconveniences, weakness, and deformities, that it may rise with greater glory, strength and proportion : and to all her other qualities, may that of *incorruption* be added too, at least till the general Conflagration. And I know your great *Wisdom* and *Justice* will take care, that those who have suffered by the ruines, may not likewise suffer by the rising of it, that the glory of the *City* may not be laid upon the *tears* of the *Orphans* and *Widows*, but that its foundations may be settled upon *Justice* and *Piety*. That there be no complaining in the *Streets* for want of *Righteousness*, nor in the *City* for want of *Churches*, nor in the *Churches* for want of a settled maintenance. That those who attend upon the service of *God* in them may never be tempted to betray their *Consciences* to gain a livelihood, nor to comply with the factious humours of men, that they may be able to live among them. And thus when the *City* through the blessing of Heaven shall be built again, may it be a *Habitation of Holiness* towards *God*, of *Loyalty* towards our *Gracious King* and his *Successors*, of *Justice* and *Righteousness* towards *Men*, of *Sobriety*, and *Peace*, and *Unity* among all the *Inhabitants*, till not *Cities* and *Countries* only, but the *World* and time it self shall be no more. Which *God* of his infinite mercy grant through the merits and mediation of his *Son*, to whom with the *Father* and *Eternal Spirit*, be all Honour and Glory for evermore. *Amen.*

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# SERMON II.

Preached before the

# K I N G,

March 13. 166 $\frac{6}{7}$ .

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PR OV. XIV. 9.

*Fools make a mock at Sin.*

**W**HEN *God* by his infinite Wisdom had contrived, and by a Power and Goodness, as infinite as his Wisdom, had perfected the creation of the visible World, there seemed to be nothing wanting to the Glory of it, but a Creature endued with reason and understanding, which might comprehend the design of his Wisdom, enjoy the benefits of his Goodness, and employ it self in the celebration of his Power. The Beings purely intellectual were too highly raised by their own order and creation, to be the *Lords* of this inferior World: and those whose natures could reach no higher than the objects of sense, were not capable of discovering the glorious perfections of the great Creator; and therefore could not be the fit *Instruments* of his praise and service. But a conjunction of both these together was thought necessary to make up such a sort of Being, which might at once command this lower World, and be the servants of him who made it. Not as though this great Fabrick of the World were merely raised for Man to please his fancy in the contemplation of it, or to exercise his dominion over the Creatures designed for his use and service: but that by frequent reflections on the Author of his being, and the effects of his power and goodness he might be brought to the greatest love and admiration of him. So that the most natural part of *Religion* lies in the grateful acknowledgments we owe to that excellent and supream Being, who hath shewed so particular a kindness to Man in the Creation and Government of the World. Which was so great and unexpressible, that some have thought it was not so much pride and affectation of a greater height, as envy at the felicity and power of mankind, which was the occasion of the fall of the *Apostate spirits*. But whether or no the state of Man were occasion enough for the envy of the *Spirits* above; we are sure the kindness of Heaven was so great in it, as could not but lay an indispensable obligation on all mankind to perpetual gratitude and obedience. For it is as easie to suppose, that affronts and injuries are the most suitable

returns for the most obliging favours, that the first duty of a *Child* should be to destroy his Parents; that to be thankful for kindneses received, were to commit the unpardonable sin; as that Man should receive his being and all the blessings which attend it from *God*, and not be bound to the most universal obedience to him.

And as the reflection on the Author of his being, leads him to the acknowledgment of his duty towards *God*, so the consideration of the design of it, will more easily acquaint him with the nature of that duty which is expected from him. Had Man been designed only to act a short part here in the World, all that had been required of him, had been only to express his thankfulness to *God* for his being, and the comforts of it: the using all means for the due preservation of himself; the doing nothing beneath the dignity of humane nature, nothing injurious to those who were of the same nature with himself; but since he is designed for greater and nobler ends, and his present state, is but a state of trial, in order to future happiness and misery; the reason of good and evil is not to be taken merely from his present, but from the respect, which things have to that eternal state he is designed for. From whence it follows, that the differences of good and evil are rooted in the nature of our beings, and are the necessary consequents of our relation to *God*, and each other, and our expectations of a future life. And therefore according to these measures, the estimation of men in the World hath been while they did preserve any veneration for *God* or *themselves*. Wisdom and folly was not measured so much by the subtilty and curiosity of mens speculations, by the fineness of their thoughts, or the depth of their designs, as by their endeavours to hold up the dignity of mankind; by their piety and devotion towards *God*; by their sobriety and due Government of their actions; by the equality and justice, the charity and kindness of their dealings to one another. Wisdom was but another name for goodness, and folly for sin. Then it was a mans glory to be religious; and to be prophane and vitious, was to be base and mean. Then there were no *Gods* worshipped because they were bad, nor any men disgraced because they were good. Then there were no *Temples* erected to the meanest passions of humane nature, nor men became *Idolaters* to their own infirmities. Then to be betrayed into sin, was accounted weakness; to contrive it, dishonour and baseness; to justify and defend it, infamy and reproach; to make a mock at it, a mark of the highest folly and incorrigibleness. So the Wise Man in the Words of the Text assures us, that they are *Fools*, and those of the highest rank and degree of folly, *who make a mock at sin*.

It is well for us in the Age we live in, that we have the judgment of former ages to appeal to, and of those persons in them whose reputation for Wisdom is yet unquestionable. For otherwise we might be born down by that spiteful enemy to all virtue and goodness, the impudence of such, who it is hard to say, whether they shew it more in committing sin, or in defending it. Men whose manners are so bad, that scarce any thing can be imagined worse, unless it be the wit they use to excuse them with. Such who take the measure of mans perfections downwards, and the nearer they approach to beasts, the more they think themselves to act like men. No wonder then, if among such as these the differences of good and evil be laughed at, and no sin be thought so unpardonable, as the thinking that there is any at all. Nay, the  
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utmost they will allow in the description of sin, is, that it is a thing that some live by declaiming against, and others cannot live without the practice of.

But is the *Chair of Scorners* at last proved the only chair of infallibility? Must those be the standard of mankind, who seem to have little left of humane nature, but laughter and the shape of men? Do they think that we are all become such fools to take scoffs for arguments, and raillery for demonstrations? He knows nothing at all of goodness, that knows not that it is much more easie to laugh at it, than to practise it; and it were worth the while to *make a mock at sin*, if the doing so would make nothing of it. But the nature of things does not vary with the humours of men; sin becomes not at all the less dangerous because men have so little Wit to think it so; nor *Religion* the less excellent and advantageous to the World, because the greatest enemies of that are so much to themselves too, that they have learnt to despise it. But although that scorns to be defended by such weapons whereby her enemies assault her, (nothing more unbecoming the *Majesty of Religion*, than to make it self cheap, by making others laugh) yet if they can but obtain so much of themselves to attend with patience to what is serious, there may be yet a possibility of perswading them, that no *fools* are so great as those who laugh themselves into misery, and none so certainly do so, as those *who make a mock at sin*.

But if our authority be too mean and contemptible to be relied on, in a matter wherein they think us so much concerned (and so I hope we are to prevent the ruine of mens souls) we dare with confidence appeal to the general sense of mankind in the matter of our present debate. Let them name but any one person in all the monuments of former ages, to whom but the bare suspicion of Vice was not a diminution to an esteem that might otherwise have been great in the World. And if the bare suspicion would do so much among even the more rude and barbarous Nations, what would open and professed Wickedness do among the more knowing and civil? Humane nature retains an abhorrency of sin, so far that it is impossible for men to have the same esteem of those who are given over to all manner of wickedness, though otherwise of great sharpness of wit, and of such whose natural abilities may not exceed the other, but yet do govern their actions according to the strict rules of *Religion* and *Virtue*. And the general sense of mankind cannot be by any thing better known, than by an universal consent of men, as to the ways whereby they express their value and esteem of others. What they all agree on as the best character of a person worthy to be loved and honoured, we may well think is the most agreeable to humane nature; and what is universally thought a disparagement to the highest accomplishments, ought to be looked on as the disgrace and imperfection of it. Did ever any yet, though never so wicked and prophane themselves, seriously commend another person for his rudeness and debaucheries? Was any mans lust or intemperance ever reckoned among the Titles of his honour? Who ever yet raised *Trophies* to his vices, or thought to perpetuate his memory by the glory of them? Where was it ever known, that sobriety and temperance, justice and charity were thought the marks of reproach and infamy? Who ever suffered in their reputation by being thought to be really good? Nay, it is so far from it, that the most wicked persons do inwardly esteem them whether they will or no. By which we see, that even in this lapsed and degenerate condition of mankind, it is only goodness which gains true honour and esteem, and nothing doth so effectually blast a growing reputation, as wickedness and vice.

But if it be thus with the generality of Men; who are never yet thought to have too much partiality towards goodness, we may much more easily find it among those, who have had a better ground for the reputation of their wisdom, than the mere vogue of the People. He who was pronounced by the *Heathen Oracle*, to be the wisest among the *Greeks*, was the person who brought down Philosophy from the obscure and uncertain speculations of Nature, and in all his Discourses recommended Virtue as the truest Wisdom. And he among the *Jews*, whose *soul was as large as the sand on the Sea-shore, whose wisdom out-went that of all the persons of his own or future Ages*, writes a Book on purpose to persuade men, that there is no real wisdom, but to fear God and keep his Commandments: That sin is the greatest folly, and the meaner apprehensions men have of it, the more they are infatuated by the temptations to it. But as there are degrees of sinning, so there are of folly in it. Some sin with a blushing Countenance, and a trembling Conscience; they sin, but yet they are they afraid to sin, and in the act of it they condemn themselves for what they do; they sin, but with confusion in their faces, with horror in their minds, and an earthquake in their Consciences: though the condition of such persons be dangerous, and their unquietness shews the greatness of their folly, yet because these twitches of Conscience argue there are some quick touches left of the sense of good and evil, their case is not desperate, nor their condition incurable: But there are others who despise these as the reproach of the *School of Wickedness*, because they are not yet attained to those heights of impiety which they glory in: such who have subdued their Consciences much easier than others do their sins; who have almost worn out all the impressions of the *work of the Law written in their Hearts*; who not only make a practice, but a boast of sin, and defend it with as much greediness as they commit it: these are the men, whose folly is manifest to all men but themselves; and surely, since these are the men, whom *Solomon* in the words of the *Text* describes,

(1.) By their character, as *Fools*, and,

(2.) By the instance of their folly, *in making a mock at sin*; We may have not only the liberty to use, but (1.) To prove that Name of reproach to be due unto them; and (2.) To shew the reasonableness of fastning it upon them, because they *make a mock at sin*.

But before I come more closely to pursue that, it will be necessary to consider another sense of these words caused by the ambiguity of the *Hebrew Verb*, which sometimes signifies to deride and scorn, sometimes to plead for, and excuse a thing with all the arts of *Rhetorick* (thence the word for *Rhetorick* is derived from the Verb here used) according to which sense, it notes all the plausible pretences and subtle extenuations which wicked men use in defence of their evil actions. For as if men intended to make some recompence for the folly they betray in the acts of sin, by the wit they employ in the pleading for them, there is nothing they shew more industry and care in, than in endeavouring to baffle their own Consciences, and please themselves in their folly, till Death and eternal flames awaken them. That we may not therefore seem to beg all wicked Men for *Fools*, till we have heard what they have to say for themselves, we shall first examine the reasonableness of their fairest Pleas for their evil actions, before we make good the particular impeachment of *folly* against them. There are three ways especially whereby they seek to justify themselves; by laying

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the blame of all their evil actions, either upon the fatal necessity of all events, the unavoidable frailty of humane nature, or the impossibility of keeping the Laws of Heaven; But that none of these will serve to excuse them from the just imputation of *folly*, is our present business to discover.

1. *The fatal necessity of all humane actions*: Those who upon any other terms are unwilling enough to own either *God* or *Providence*, yet if they can but make these serve their turn to justify their sins by, their quarrel against them then ceaseth, as being much more willing that *God* should bear the blame of their sins, than themselves. But yet the very fears of a *Deity* suggest so many dreadful thoughts of his *Majesty*, *Justice*, and *Power*, that they are very well contented to have him wholly left out: and then to suppose Man to be a meer Engin, that is necessarily moved by such a train and series of causes, that there is no action how bad soever that is done by him, which it was any more possible for him not to have done, than for the fire not to burn when it pleases. If this be true, farewell all the differences of good and evil in mens actions; farewell all expectations of future rewards and punishments; *Religion* becomes but a meer name, and righteousness but an art to live by. But it is with this, as it is with the other Arguments they use against *Religion*; there is something within, which checks and controlls them in what they say: and that inward remorse of Conscience, which such men sometimes feel in their evil actions (when Conscience is forced to recoil by the foulness of them) doth effectually confute their own *hypothesis*; and makes them not believe those actions to be necessary, for which they suffer so much in themselves because they knew they did them freely. Or it is as fatal for man to believe himself free when he is not so, as it is for him to act when his choice is determined: But what *series* of causes is there that doth so necessarily impose upon the common sense of all mankind? It seems very strange, that Man should have so little sense of his own interest to be still necessitated to the worst of actions, and yet torment himself with the thoughts that he did them freely. Or is it only the *freedom of action*, and not of *choice*, that men have an experience of within themselves? But surely, however men may subtilly dispute of the difference between these two, no man would ever believe himself to be free in what he does, unless he first thought himself to be so, in what he determines: And if we suppose Man to have as great a *freedom of choice* in all his evil actions (which is the liberty we are now speaking of) as any persons assert or contend for, we cannot suppose that he should have a greater experience of it, than now he hath. So that either it is impossible for Man to know when his choice is free; or if it may be known, the constant experience of all evil Men in the World will testify, that it is so now. Is it possible for the most intemperate person to believe, when the most pleasing temptations to lust or gluttony are presented to him, that no consideration whatever could restrain his appetite, or keep him from the satisfaction of his brutish inclinations? Will not the sudden, though groundless apprehension of poyson in the Cup, make the Drunkards heart to ake, and hand to tremble, and to let fall the supposed fatal mixture in the midst of all his jollity and excess? How often have persons who have designed the greatest mischief to the lives and fortunes of others, when all opportunities have fallen out beyond their expectation for accomplishing their ends, through some sudden thoughts

thoughts which have surprized them, almost in the very act, been diverted from their intended purposes? Did ever any yet imagine that the charms of beauty and allurements of lust were so irresistible, that if Men knew beforehand they should surely dye in the embraces of an adulterous bed, they could not yet withstand the temptations to it? If then some considerations, which are quite of another nature from all the objects which are presented to him, may quite hinder the force and efficacy of them upon the mind of Man (as we see in *Joseph's* resisting the importunate Caresses of his Mistress) what reason can there be to imagine that Man is a meer *machine* moved only as outward objects determine him? And if the considerations of present fear and danger may divert Men from the practice of evil actions, shall not the far more weighty considerations of eternity have at least an equal, if not a far greater power and efficacy upon mens minds, to keep them from everlasting misery? Is an immortal soul and the eternal happiness of it so mean a thing in our esteem and value, that we will not deny our selves those sensual pleasures for the sake of that which we would renounce for some present danger? Are the flames of another world such painted fires, that they deserve only to be laughed at, and not seriously considered by us; Fond Man! art thou only free to ruine and destroy thy self? A strange faulty indeed, when nothing but what is mean and trivial shall determine thy choice! when matters of the highest moment are therefore less regarded, because they are such. Hast thou no other plea for thy self, but that thy sins were fatal? thou hast no reason then to believe but that thy misery shall be so too. But if thou ownest a *God* and *Providence*, assure thy self, that justice and righteousness are not meer *Titles* of his *Honour*, but the real properties of his nature. And he who hath appointed the rewards and punishments of the great day, will then call the sinner to account, not only for all his other sins, but for offering to lay the imputation of them upon himself. For if the greatest abhorrency of mens evil ways, the rigour of his laws, the severity of his judgments, the exactness of his justice, the greatest care used to reclaim men from their sins, and the highest assurance, that he is not the cause of their ruine, may be any vindication of the holiness of *God* now, and his justice in the life to come; we have the greatest reason to lay the blame of all our evil actions upon our selves, as to attribute the glory of all our good unto himself alone:

2. *The frailty of humane Nature*: those who find themselves to be free enough to do their souls mischief, and yet continue still in the doing of it, find nothing more ready to plead for themselves, than the unhappiness of mans composition, and the degenerate state of the world. If *God* had designed (they are ready to say) that man should lead a life free from sin, why did he confine the soul of man to a body so apt to taint and pollute it? But who art thou O man, that thus findest fault with thy Maker? Was not his kindness the greater, in not only giving thee a soul capable of enjoying himself, but such an habitation for it here, which by the curiosity of its contrivance, the number and usefulness of its parts, might be a perpetual and domestick testimony of the wisdom of its *Maker*? Was not such a conjunction of soul and body necessary for the exercise of that dominion which *God* designed man for, over the creatures endued only with sense and motion? and if we suppose this life to be a state of tryal in order to a better, (as in all reason we ought to do) what can be imagined more proper to such a state,

state, than to have the soul constantly employed in the government of those sensual inclinations which arise from the body? In the doing of which, the proper exercise of that virtue consists, which is made the condition of future happiness. Had it not been for such a composition, the difference could never have been seen between good and bad men; *i.e.* between those who maintain the Empire of reason, assisted by the motives of *Religion*, over all the inferiour faculties, and such who dethrone their souls and make them slaves to every lust that will command them. And if men willingly subject themselves to that which they were born to rule, they have none to blame but themselves for it. Neither is it any excuse at all, that this through the degeneracy of mankind, is grown the common custom of the world; unless that be in it self so great a Tyrant, that there is no resisting the power of it. If God had commanded us to comply with all the customs of the World, and at the same time to be *sober, righteous, and good*, we must have lived in another age than we live in, to have excused these two commands from a palpable contradiction. But instead of this, he hath forewarned us of the danger of being led aside by the soft and easie compliances of the World; and if we are sensible of our own infirmities, (as we have all reason to be) he hath offered us the assistance of his *Grace* and of that *Spirit* of his, \* *which is greater than the Spirit that is in the World.* † *[John]*  
 He hath promised us those weapons whereby we may withstand the *tor-* 4. 4.  
*rent* of wickedness in the world, with far greater success than the old † *Gauls* were wont to do in the inundations of their Country; † *Nicol. Damascent. de moribus gent. p. 9. Ed. Craigii.*  
 whose custom was to be drowned with their Arms in their Hands. But it will be the greater folly in us to be so, because we have not only sufficient means of resistance, but we understand the danger beforehand. If we once forsake the strict rules of Religion and Goodness, and are ready to yield our selves to whatever hath got retainers enough to set up for a custom, we may know where we begin, but we cannot where we shall make an end. For every fresh assault makes the breach wider, at which more enemies may come in still; so that when we find our selves under their power, we are contented for our own ease to call them *Friends*. Which is the unhappy consequence of too easie yielding at first, till at last the greatest slavery to sin be accounted but good humour, and a gentile compliance with the Fashions of the World. So that when men are perswaded, either through fear, or too great easiness to disguise that strict eye which they had before to their actions, it oft-times falls out with them, as it did with the Souldier in the † *Roman History*, who blinded his eye so long in the time of the Civil Wars, that when he would have used it again, he could not. And when custom hath by degrees taken away the sense of sin from their Consciences, they grow as hard as \* *Herodotus* tells us the heads of the old *Egyptians* \* *Herod. Thal. v. Synes. de laps. de Calvini. ii. p. 77.*  
 were by the heat of Sun, that nothing would ever enter them. If men will with *Nebuchadnezzar* herd with the beast of the field, no wonder if their reason departs from them, and by degrees they grow as savage as the Company they keep. So powerful a thing is Custom to debauch Mankind, and so easily do the greatest vices by degrees obtain admission into the souls of Men, under pretence of being retainers to the common *infirmities* of humane nature. Which is a *phrase*, thro' the power of self-flattery, and mens ignorance in the nature of moral actions, made to be of so large and comprehensive a sence that the most wilful violations of the *Laws* of Heaven, and such which the *Scripture* tells

tells us do exclude from the *Kingdom* of it, do find (rather than make) friends enough to shelter themselves under the *protection* of them. But such a *protection* it is, which is neither allowed in the Court of Heaven, nor will ever secure the souls of men without a hearty and sincere repentance, from the arrest of divine justice; which when it comes to call the World to an account of their actions will make no defalcations at all for the power of custom, or common practice of the World.

3. *The Impossibility of the Command, or rather of obedience to it.* When neither of the former pleas will effect their design, but notwithstanding the pretended *necessity of humane actions*, and the more than pretended *common practice of the World*, their Consciences still fly in their faces, and rebuke them sharply for their sins, then in a mighty rage and fury they charge *God* himself with *Tyranny* in laying impossible *Laws* upon the sons of men. But if we either consider the nature of the command, or the promises which accompany it, or the larger experience of the world to the contrary, we shall easily discover that this pretence is altogether as unreasonable as either of the foregoing. For what is it that *God* requires of men as the condition of their future happiness which in its own nature is judged impossible? Is it for men to \* *live soberly, righteously and godly in this world*? for that was the end of Christian Religion to persuade men to do so: but who thinks it impossible to avoid the occasions of intemperance, not to defraud, or injure his neighbours, or to pay that reverence and sincere devotion to *God* which we owe unto him? *Is it to do as we would be done by*? yet that hath been judged by strangers to the *Christian Religion* a most exact measure of humane conversation: Is it *to maintain an universal kindness and good will to Men*? that indeed is the great excellency of our Religion, that it so strictly requires it; but if this be impossible, farewell all good nature in the world; and I suppose few will own this charge, lest theirs be suspected. Is it *to be patient under sufferings, moderate in our desires, circumspect in our actions, contented in all conditions*? yet these are things which those have pretended to who never owned *Christianity*, and therefore surely they never thought them impossible. Is it *to be charitable to the poor, compassionate to those in misery*? Is it *to be frequent in Prayer, to love God above all things, to forgive our enemies as we hope God will forgive us, to believe the Gospel, and be ready to suffer for the sake of Christ*; there are very few among us but will say they do all these things already, and therefore surely they do not think them impossible. The like answer I might give to all the other Precepts of the *Gospel* till we come to the *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and as to these too, if we charge men with them, they either deny their committing them, and then say they have kept the command: or if they confess it, they promise amendment for the future; but in neither respect can they be said to think the command impossible. Thus we see their own mouths will condemn them when they charge *God* with laying impossible *Laws* on mankind. But if we enquire further than into the judgments of those (who it may be never concerned themselves so much about the Precepts of *Christian Religion*, as to try whether they had any power to observe them or not;) nay, if we yield them more (than, it may be, they are willing to enquire after, though they ought to do it) *viz.* without the *assistance of divine grace*, they can never do it: yet such is the unlimited nature of divine goodness and the exceeding riches of *God's Grace*, that (knowing the weakness and degeneracy of hu-  
mane

mane Nature when he gave these commands to Men) he makes a large and free offer of assistance to all those who are so sensible of their own infirmity as to beg it of him. And can men then say the command is impossible when he hath promised an assistance suitable to the nature of the duty and the infirmities of men? If it be acknowledged that some of the duties of *Christianity* are very difficult to us now; let us consider by what means he hath sweetned the performance of them. Will not the proposal of so excellent a reward, make us swallow some more than ordinary hardships that we might enjoy it? Hath he not made use of the most obliging motives to persuade us to the practice of what he requires by the infinite discovery of his own love, the death of his Son, and the promise of his Spirit? And what then is wanting, but only setting our selves to the serious obedience of them, to make his commands not only not impossible, but easie to us? But our grand fault is, we make impossibilities our selves where we find none, and then we complain of them; we are first resolved not to practice the commands, and then nothing more easie than to find fault with them; we first pass sentence, and then examine evidences; first condemn, and then enquire into the merits of the Cause. Yet surely none of these things can be accounted impossible, which have been done by all those who have been sincere and hearty Christians; and *God* forbid we should think all guilty of hypocrisie, who have professed the *Christian Religion* from the beginning of it to this day. Nay more than so, they have not only done them, but professed to have that joy and satisfaction of mind in the doing of them, which they would not exchange for all the pleasures and delights of the World. These were the men, who not only were patient but rejoiced in sufferings; who accounted it their honour and glory to endure any thing for the sake of so excellent a Religion; who were so assured of a future happiness by it, that they valued Martyrdoms above Crowns and Scepters. But *God* be thanked, we may hope to come to Heaven on easier terms than these, or else many others might never come thither, besides those who think to make this a pretence for their sin, that now when with encouragement and honour we may practice our Religion, the commands of it are thought impossible by them. Thus we have made good the general Charge here implied against wicked men in that they are called *Fools*, by examining the most plausible pretences they bring for themselves.

I now come to the particular impeachment of their folly, because *they make a mock at sin*. And that I shall prove especially by two things: 1. Because this argues *the highest degree of wickedness*. 2. Because it betrays the *greatest weakness of judgment and want of consideration*.

1. Because it argues *the highest degree of wickedness*. If to sin be folly, to make a mock at it, is little short of madness. It is such a height of impiety that few but those who are of very profligate consciences can attain to, without a long custom in sinning. For Conscience is at first modest, and starts and boggles at the appearance of a great wickedness, till it be used to it and grown familiar with it. It is no such easie matter for a man to get the mastery of his conscience, a great deal of force and violence must be used to ones self before he does it. The natural impressions of good and evil, the fears of a *Deity*, and the apprehensions of a future state are such curbs and checks in a sinners way, that he must first sin himself beyond all feeling of these, before he can at-

tain to the *seat* of the *scorners*. And we may justly wonder how any should ever come thither, when they must break through all that is ingenuous and modest, all that is vertuous and good, all that is tender and apprehensive in humane nature, before they can arrive at it. They must first deny a *God*, and despise an immortal soul, they must conquer their own reason, and cancel the *Law written in their Hearts*, they must hate all that is serious, and yet soberly believe themselves to be no better *than the beasts that perish*, before men can come to make a *scoff at religion*, and a *mock at sin*.

And who now could ever imagine that in a Nation professing *Christianity*, among a people whose *genius* enclines them to civility and religion, yea among those who have the greatest advantages of behaviour and education, and who are to give the *Laws* of civility to the rest of the Nation, there should any be found who should deride religion, make sport with their own profaneness, and make so light of nothing, as being damned? I come not here to accuse any, and least of all those who shew so much regard of *religion* as to be present in the places devoted to sacred purposes; but if there be any such here, whose consciences accuse themselves for any degrees of so great impiety, I beseech them by all that is dear and precious to them, by all that is sacred and serious, by the vows of their *Baptism*, and their participation of the *Holy Eucharist*, by all the kindness of Heaven which they either enjoy or hope for, by the death and sufferings of the *Son of God*, that they would now consider how great folly and wickedness they betray in it, and what the dreadful consequence of it will be, if they do not timely repent of it. If it were a doubt (as I hope it is not among any here) whether the matters of *Religion* be true or no, they are surely things which ought to be seriously thought and spoken of. It is certainly no jesting matter to affront a *God* of infinite *Majesty* and *Power*, (and he judges every wilful sinner to do so) nor can any one in his wits think it a thing not to be regarded, whether he be eternally happy or miserable. Methinks then among persons of civility and honour above all others, *Religion* might at least be treated with the respect and reverence due to the concerns of it; that it be not made the sport of Entertainments, nor the common subject of *Plays* and *Comedies*. For is there nothing to trifle with but *God* and his Service? Is wit grown so schismatical and sacrilegious, that it can please it self with nothing but holy ground? Are prophaneness and wit grown such inseparable companions, that none shall be allowed to pretend to the one, but such as dare be highly guilty of the other? Far be it from those who have but the name of *Christians*, either to do these things themselves, or to be pleased with them that do them: especially in such times as ours of late have been, when *God* hath used so many ways to make us serious if any thing would ever do it. If men had only slighted *God* and *Religion*, and made a *mock at sin*, when they had grown wanton through the abundance of peace and plenty, and saw no severities of *God's justice* used upon such who did it; yet the fault had been so great, as might have done enough to have interrupted their peace, and destroyed that plenty, which made them out of the greatness of their pride and wantonness to kick against Heaven: but to do it in despite of all *God's* judgments, to *laugh in his face* when *his rod is upon our backs*, when neither Pestilence nor Fire can make us more afraid of him, exceedingly aggravates the impiety, and makes it more unpardonable. When like the old \**Germans we dance among*

\* *Tacit. de  
moribus  
German.*

*naked*



*naked swords*, when men shall defie and reproach Heaven in the midst of a Cities ruines, and over the graves of those whom the arrows of the *Almighty* have heaped together, what can be thought of such but that nothing will make them serious, but eternal misery? And are they so sure there is no such thing to be feared, that they never think of it, but when by their execrable oaths they call upon *God to damn them*, for fear he should not do it time enough for them? Thus will men abuse his patience, and provoke his justice, while they trample upon his kindness, and slight his severities, while they despise his Laws and mock at the breaches of them, what can be added more to their impiety? or what can be expected by such who are guilty of it, but that *God* should quickly discover their mighty folly by letting them see how much they have deceived themselves, since \* *God will not be mocked*, but † *because of these things the wrath of God will most certainly come upon the Children of Disobedience*. Which † *Eph. 5.6.* \* *Gal. 6.7.* leads to the second thing, wherein this folly is seen.

2. Which is in *the weakness of judgment and want of consideration*, which this betrays in men. *Folly* is the great unsteadiness of the mind in the thoughts of what is good and fitting to be done. It were happy for many in the World, if none should suffer in their reputation for want of wisdom, but such whom nature or some violent distemper have wholly deprived of the use of their reason and understandings: But wisdom does not lie in the rambling imaginations of mens minds (*for fools may think of the same things which wise men practice*) but in a due consideration and choice of things which are most agreeable to the end they design, supposing the end in the first place to be worthy a wise Mans choice; for I cannot yet see why the end may not be chosen as well as the means, when there are many stand in competition for our choice, and men first deliberate, and then determine which is the fittest to be pursued. But when the actions of men discover, that either they understand or regard not the most excellent end of their beings, or do those things which directly cross and thwart their own designs, or else pursue those which are mean and ignoble in themselves, we need not any further evidence of their folly, than these things discover.

Now that those who *make a mock at sin* are guilty of all these, will appear, if we consider whom they provoke by doing so, whom they most injure, and upon what reasonable consideration they are moved to what they do.

1. *Whom they provoke by their making a mock at sin*; supposing that there is a *Governour* of the World, who hath established *Laws* for us to be guided by, we may easily understand, whose honour and authority is reflected on, when the violations of his *Laws* are made nothing of: For surely, if they had a just esteem of his *Power* and *Sovereignty*, they never durst make so bold with him, as all those do who not only commit sin themselves, but laugh at the scrupulosity of those who dare not. When *Dionysius* changed *Appollo's* Cloak, and took off the *Golden Beard* of *Aesculapius*, with those solemn jeers of the unsuitableness of the one to the Son of a beardless Father, and the much greater conveniency of a cheaper Garment to the other: it was a sign he stood not much in awe of the severity of their looks, nor had any dread at all of the greatness of their power. But although there be so infinite a disproportion between the artificial *Deities* of the *Heathens* and the *Majesty* of him who made and governs the

whole World; yet as little reverence to his power and authority is shewed by all such who dare affront him with such a mighty confidence, and bid the greatest defiance to his *Laws* by scoffing at them. What is there the *Sovereigns and Princes* of the earth do more justly resent, and express the highest indignation against, than to have their *Laws* despised, their *Persons* affronted, and their *Authority* contemned? And can we then imagine, that a *God* of infinite *Power* and *Majesty*, the honour of whose *Laws* is as dear to him as his own is, should sit still unconcerned, when so many indignities are continually offered them, and never take any notice at all of them? It is true, his patience is not to be measured by our fretful and peevish natures, (and it is happy for us all that it is not) he knows the sinner can never escape his power, and therefore bears the longer with him: but yet his lenity is always joyned with his wisdom and justice, and the time is coming when patience it self shall be no more. Is it not then the highest madness and folly to provoke one whose power is infinitely greater than our own is, and from the severity of whose wrath we cannot secure our selves one minute of an hour? How knowest thou, O vain man, but that in the midst of all thy mirth and jollity, while thou art boasting of thy sins, and thinkest thou canst never fill up fast enough the measure of thy iniquities, a sudden fit of an *Apoplexy*, or the breaking of an *Aposteme*, or any of the innumerable instruments of death, may dispatch thee hence, and consign thee into the hands of divine Justice? And wherewithal then wilt thou be able to dispute with *God*? Wilt thou then charge his Providence with folly, and his *Laws* with unreasonableness? when his *Greatness* shall affright thee, his *Majesty* astonish thee, his *Power* disarm thee, and his *Justice* proceed against thee: when notwithstanding all thy *bravado's* here, thy own Conscience shall be not only thy accuser and witness, but thy judge and executioner too: when it shall *revenge* it self upon thee for all the rapes and violences thou hast committed upon it here: when horror and confusion shall be thy portion, and the unspeakable anguish of a racked and tormented mind shall too late convince thee of thy folly in *making a mock* at that which stings with an everlasting venom. Art thou then resolved to put all these things to the adventure, and live as securely as if the *terrors* of the *Almighty* were but the dreams of men awake, or the fancies of weak and distempered brains? But I had rather believe that in the heat and fury of thy lusts thou wouldest seem to others to think so, than thou either dost or canst persuade thy self to such unreasonable folly. Is it not then far better to consult the tranquility of thy mind here, and the eternal happiness of it hereafter, by a serious repentance and speedy amendment of thy life, than to expose thy self for the sake of thy sensual pleasures to the fury of that *God* whose justice is infinite, and power irresistible? Shall not *the apprehension of his excellency make thee now afraid of him*? Never then *make any mock at sin* more, unless thou art able to contend with the *Almighty*, or to dwell with everlasting burnings.

2. The folly of it is seen in considering *whom the injury redounds to* by mens making themselves so pleasant with their sins. Do they think by their rude attempts to dethrone the *Majesty* of Heaven, or by standing at the greatest defiance, to make him willing to come to terms of composition with them? Do they hope to slip beyond the bounds of his Power, by falling into nothing when they die, or to sue out *prohibitions* in the Court of Heaven, to hinder the effects of *justice* there? Do they  
design

design to out-wit infinite Wisdom, or to find such flaws in *God's* government of the World, that he shall be contented to let them go unpunished? All which imaginations are alike vain and foolish, and only shew how easily wickedness baffles the reason of mankind, and makes them rather hope or wish for the most impossible things than believe they shall ever be punished for their impieties. If the *Apostate Spirits* can by reason of their present restraint and expectation of future punishments be as pleasant in beholding the *follies* of men, as they are malicious to suggest them, it may be one of the greatest diversions of their misery, to see how active and witty men are in contriving their own ruine. To see with what greediness they catch at every bait that is offered them, and when they are swallowing the most deadly *poysson*, what arts they use to persuade themselves that is a healthful potion. No doubt, nothing can more gratifie them than to see men sport themselves into their own destruction, and go down so pleasantly to Hell: when eternal flames become their first awakers, and then men begin to be wise, when it is too late to be so: when nothing but insupportable torments can convince them that *God* was in earnest with them, and that he would not always bear the affronts of evil men, and that those who derided the miseries of another life, shall have leisure enough to repent their folly, when their repentance shall only increase their sorrow without hopes of pardon by it.

3. But if there were any present felicity, or any considerable advantage to be gained by this *mocking at sen*, and undervaluing Religion, there would seem to be some kind of pretence, though nothing of true reason for it. Yet that which heightens this folly to the highest degree in the last place is, that there can be no imaginable consideration thought on which might look like a *plausible temptation* to it. The covetous Man, when he hath defrauded his Neighbour, and used all kinds of arts to compass an Estate, hath the fulness of his bags to answer for him, and whatever they may do in another World, he is sure they will do much in this. The voluptuous Man hath the strong propensities of his Nature, the force of temptation which lies in the charms of beauty, to excuse his unlawful pleasures by. The ambitious Man, hath the greatness of his mind, the advantage of Authority, the examples of those who have been great before him, and the envy of those who condemn him, to plead for the heights he aims at. But what is it which the persons who despise Religion, and laughs at every thing that is serious, proposes to himself as the reason of what he does? But alas! this were to suppose him to be much more serious than he is, if he did propound any thing to himself as the ground of his actions. But it may be a great kindness to others, though none to himself; I cannot imagine any unless it may be, to make them thankful they are not arrived to that height of folly; or out of perfect good nature, lest they should take him to be wiser than he is. The *Psalmist-fool* despises him as much as he does Religion: for he only *saith it in his heart, there is no God*; but this tho' he dares not think there is none, yet shews him not near so much outward respect and reverence as the other does. Even the *Atheist* himself thinks him a *Fool*, and the greatest of all other, who believes a *God*, and yet affronts him and trifles with him. And although the *Atheists folly* be unaccountable, in resisting the clearest evidence of reason, yet so far he is to be commended for what he says, that if there be such a thing as *Religion*, men ought to be serious in it. So that of all hands  
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the *scoffer at Religion* is looked on as one forsaken of that little reason, which might serve to uphold a slender reputation of being above *the beasts that perish*: nay, therein his condition is worse than theirs, that as they understand not *Religion*, they shall never be punished for despising it: which such a person can never secure himself from, considering the *power*, the *justice*, the *severity* of that *God*, whom he hath so highly provoked. *God* grant that the apprehension of this danger may make us so serious in the profession and practice of our *Religion*, that we may not by slighting that, and *mocking at sin*, provoke him to *laugh at our calamities*, and *mock when our fear comes*; but that by beholding the sincerity of our repentance, and the heartiness of our devotion to him, he may *turn his anger away from us*, and *rejoyce over us to do us good*.

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# SERMON III.

Preached at

## WHITE-HALL.

LUKE VII. 35.

*But Wisdom is justified of all her Children.*

**O**F all the Circumstances of our Blessed Saviour's appearance and preaching in the World, there is none which to our first view and apprehension of things, seems more strange and unaccountable, than that those persons who were then thought of all others to be most conversant in the Law and the Prophets, should be the most obstinate opposers of him. For since he came to fulfil all the Prophecies which had gone before concerning him, and was himself the great Prophet foretold by all the rest, none might in humane probability have been judged more likely to have received and honoured him, than those to whom the judgment of those things did peculiarly belong; and who were as much concerned in the truth of them as any else could be. Thus indeed it might have been reasonably expected; and doubtless it had been so, if interest and prejudice had not had a far more absolute power and dominion over them, than they had over the rest of the people. If Miracles, and Prophecies, if Reason and Religion; nay, if the interest of another World could have prevailed over the interest of this among them; the *Jewish Sanhedrin* might have been some of the first Converts to Christianity, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* had been all Profelytes to Christ, and the Temple at *Jerusalem* had been the first Christian Church. But to let us see with what a jealous eye Power and Interest looks on every thing that seems to offer at any disturbance of it, how much greater sway partiality and prejudice hath upon the Minds of Men than true Reason and Religion; and how hard a matter it is to convince those who have no mind to be convinced; we find none more furious in their opposition to the person of Christ, none more obstinate in their infidelity as to this Doctrine, than those who were at that time in the greatest reputation among them for their authority, wisdom, and knowledge. These are they, whom our Saviour, as often as he meets with, either checks for their ignorance, or rebukes for their pride, or denounces woes against for their malice and hypocrisy: These are they who instead of believing in Christ persecute him; instead of following him seek to destroy him: and that they might the better compass it, they reproach and defame him, as if he had been really as bad as themselves. And although the people might not presently believe what they said concerning him, yet that they might at least be kept in suspense by it, they endeavour to fasten the blackest calumnies upon him;

him; and suit them with all imaginable arts to the tempers of those they had to deal with.

If any appeared zealous for the present peace and prosperity of the Nation; and for paying the duty and obedience they owed to the *Roman* Power, which then governed them; to them he is represented as a factious and seditious person, as an enemy to *Cæsar*, as one that intended to set up a Kingdom of his own, though to the ruine of his Country: That it was nothing but ambition and vain-glory, which made him gather Disciples, and preach to multitudes; that none could foretel what the dangerous consequences of such new Doctrines might be, if not timely suppressed, and the Author of them severely punished. Thus to the prudent and cautious, reason of State is pretended as the ground of their enmity to Christ. But to those who are impatient of the *Roman* Yoke, and watched for any opportunity to cast it off; they suggest the mighty improbabilities of ever obtaining any deliverance by a person so mean and inconsiderable as our Saviour appeared among them: and that surely God who delivered their Forefathers of old from a bondage not greater than theirs, by a mighty hand and out-stretched arm, did never intend the redemption of his People by one of obscure Parentage, mean Education, and of no interest in the World. To the great men, they need no more than bid them, behold the train of his followers, who being generally poor, the more numerous they were, the more mouths they might see open, and ready to devour the Estates of those who were above them. The Priests and Levites they bid consider what would become of them all, if the Law of *Moses* was abrogated, by which their interest was upheld? for if the Temple fell, it was impossible for them to stand. But the grand difficulty was among the people, who began to be possessed with so high an opinion of him by the greatness of his Miracles, the excellency of his Doctrine, and the innocency of his Conversation, that unless they could insinuate into their minds some effectual prejudices against these, all their other attempts were like to be vain and unsuccessful. If therefore they meet with any who were surprized by his Miracles as well as ravished by his Doctrine; when they saw him raise the dead, restore sight to the blind, cure the deaf and the lame, and cast out Devils out of possessed persons, they tell them presently that these were the common arts of Impostors, and the practice of those who go about to deceive the People; that such things were easily done by the power of Magick, and assistance of the evil Spirits. If any were admirers of the Pharisaical rigours and austerities (as the people generally were) when Mens Religion was measured by the sowerness of their Countenances, the length of their Prayers, and the distance they kept from other persons; these they bid especially beware of our Saviours Doctrine; for he condemned all zeal and devotion, all mortification and strictness of life, under the pretence of Pharisaical hypocrisie; that he sunk all Religion into short Prayers and dull Morality; that his conversation was not among the persons of any reputation for piety, but among Publicans and Sinners; that nothing extraordinary appeared in his Life; that his actions were like other mens, and his company none of the best, and his behaviour among them with too great a freedom for a person who pretended to so high a degree of holiness.

Thus we see the most perfect innocency could not escape the venom of malicious tongues; but the less it enter'd, the more they were en-

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raged, and made up what wanted in the truth of their calumnies, by their diligence in spreading them. As though their mouths indeed had been open Sepulchers by the noysom vapours which came out of them; and we may well think no less a poyson than that of Asps could be under their lips, which so secretly and yet so mischievously conveyed it self into the hearts of the people. The only advantage which malice hath against the greatest Vertue, is, that the greater it is, the less it takes notice of all the petty arts which are used against it; and will not bring its own innocency so much into suspicion as to make any long Apologies for it self. For, to a noble and generous spirit, assaulted rather by noise and clamour, than any solid reason or force of argument, neglect and disdain are the most proper weapons of defence; for where malice is only impertinent and troublesome, a punctual answer seems next to a confession. But although innocency needs no defence as to it self, yet it is necessary for all the advantages it hath of doing good to mankind, that it appear to be what it really is; which cannot be done, unless its reputation be cleared from the malicious aspersions which are cast upon it. And from hence it was that our blessed Saviour, though he thought it not worth the while to use the same diligence in the vindication of himself, which his enemies did in the defamation of him; yet when he saw it necessary in order to the reception of his Doctrine among the more ingenuous and tractable part of his auditors, he sometimes by the quickness of his replies, sometimes by the suddenness and sharpness of his questions, and sometimes by the plain force of argument and reason baffles his adversaries, so that tho' they were resolved not to be convinced, they thought it best for the time to be quiet. This was to let them see how easy it was for him to throw off their reproaches as fast as their malice could invent them; and that it was as impossible for them by such weak attempts to obscure the reputation of his innocency, as for the spots which Astronomers discern near the body of the Sun, ever to eclipse the light of it. So that all those thinner mists which envy and detraction raised at his first appearance, and those grosser vapours which arose from their openenmity when he came to a greater height; did but add a brighter luster to his glory, when it was seen that notwithstanding all the machinations of his enemies, his innocency brake forth like the light, which shineth more and more to the perfect day.

But it pleased God, for the tryal of mens minds so to order the matters of our Religion, that as they are never so clear, but men of obstinate and perverse spirits will find something to cavil at; so they were never so dark and obscure in the most difficult circumstances of them, but men of unprejudiced and ingenuous minds might find enough to satisfy themselves about them. Which is the main scope of our Saviour in the Words of the Text, (and shall be of our present discourse upon them) *but Wisdom is justified of all her Children.* Where without any further Explication, by *Wisdom* we understand the method which God useth in order to the Salvation of Mankind; by the *Children of Wisdom*, all those who were willing to attain the end by the means which God affordeth, and by *justifying* not only the bare approving it, but the declaring of that approbation to the World by a just vindication of it from the cavils and exceptions of men. Although the Words are capable of various senses, yet this is the most natural, and agreeable to the scope of what goes before. For

there our Saviour speaks of the different ways wherein *John Baptist* and himself appeared among the *Jews*, in order to the same end, v. 32. For *John Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and ye say, he hath a Devil.* A very severe Devil surely, and one of the strictest order among them, that was so far from being cast out by fasting and prayer, that these were his continual employment! But what could we have sooner thought than that those persons who made the Devil the author of so much mortification and severity of life, should presently have entertained Religion in a more free and pleasing humour; but this would not take neither, for *the Son of Man comes eating and drinking*; i.e. was remarkable for none of those rigours and austerities which they condemned in *John*, and applauded in the *Pharisees*; and then presently they censure him, *as a gluttonous Man, and a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners*, v. 34. i.e. the utmost excess that any course of life was capable of, they presently apply to those who had no other design in all their actions, than to recommend true piety and goodness to them. So impossible it was by any means which the wisdom of Heaven thought fit to use, to persuade them into any good opinion of the persons who brought the glad tidings of Salvation to them: and therefore our Saviour, when he sees how refractory and perverse they were, in interpreting every thing to the worse, and censuring the ways which infinite Wisdom thought fittest to reclaim them by, he tells them that it was nothing but malice and obstinacy which was the cause of it; but if they were men of teachable spirits (who by an usual Hebraism are called the Children of Wisdom) they would see reason enough to admire, approve and justify all the methods of divine Providence for the good of Mankind. *For Wisdom is justified of all her Children.*

That which I mainly design to speak to from hence is, *That although the wisest Contrivances of Heaven for the good of Mankind are liable to the unjust cavils and exceptions of unreasonable Men, yet there is enough to satisfy any teachable and ingenuous Minds concerning the Wisdom of them.* Before I come more particularly to examine those which concern our present subject, viz. the life and appearance of our Lord and Saviour, it will take very much off from the force of them, if we consider, that thus it hath always been, and supposing humane nature to be as it is, it is scarce conceivable that it should be otherwise. Not that it is necessary or reasonable it should be so at all, any more than it is necessary that Men should act foolishly or inconsiderately; but as long as we must never expect to see all Men either wise or pious, either to have a true judgment of things, or a Love of Religion; so long we shall always find there will be some, who will be quarrelling with Religion when they have no mind to practice it. I speak not now of those who make a meer jest and scoff at Religion (of which our Age hath so many Instances) but a sort of Men who are of a degree above the other, though far enough short of any true and solid wisdom; who yet are the more to be considered, because they seem to make a slender offer at reason in what they say. Some pretend they are not only unsatisfied with the particular ways of instituted Religion, any further than they are subservient to their present interest (which is the only God they worship) but to make all sure the foundations even of Natural Religion itself cannot escape their cavils and exceptions. They have found out an *Index Expurgatorius* for those impressions of a Deity which are in the Hearts of Men; and use their utmost arts to obscure, since they cannot extinguish,



extinguish, those lively characters of the Power, Wisdom and Goodness of God, which are every where to be seen in the large Volume of the Creation. Religion is no more to them but an unaccountable fear; and the very notion of a Spiritual substance (even of that without which we could never know what a contradiction meant) is said to imply one. But if for quietness sake, and it may be to content their own minds as well as the World, they are willing to admit of a Deity, (which is a mighty concession from those who have so much cause to be afraid of him) then to ease their minds of such troublesome companions as their fears are, they seek by all means to dispossess him of his Government of the World by denying his Providence, and care of humane affairs. They are contented he should be called an excellent Being, that should do nothing, and therefore signifie nothing in the World; or rather, that he might be stiled an Almighty *Sardanapalus*, that is so fond of ease and pleasure, that the least thought of business would quite spoil his happiness. Or if the activity of their own spirits may make them think that such an excellent Being may sometimes draw the Curtains and look abroad into the World, then every advantage which another hath got above them, and every cross accident which befalls themselves (which by the power of self flattery most Men have learnt to call the Prosperity of the wicked, and the Sufferings of good Men) serve them for mighty charges against the justice of Divine Providence. Thus either God shall not govern the World at all, or if he do, it must be upon such terms as they please and approve of, or else they will erect an High Court of Justice upon him, and condemn the Sovereign of the World, because he could not please his discontented Subjects. And as if he were indeed arraigned at such a bar, every weak and peevish exception shall be cryed up for evidence; when the fullest and clearest vindications of him shall be scorned and contemned. But this doth not in the least argue the obnoxiousness of him who is so accused, but the great injustice of those who dare pass sentence; where it is neither in their power to understand the reason of his actions, nor if it were, to call him in question for his proceedings with Men. But so great is the pride and arrogance of humane Nature, that it loves to be condemning what it cannot comprehend; and there needs be no greater reason given concerning the many disputes in the World about Divine Providence, than that God is wise, and we are not, but would fain seem to be so. While Men are in the dark they will be always quarrelling; and those who contend the most, do it that they might seem to others to see, when they know themselves they do not. Nay, there is nothing so plain and evident, but the reason of some Men is more apt to be imposed upon in it, than their senses are; as it appeared in him who could not otherwise confute the Philosophers argument against motion, but by moving before him. So that we see the most certain things in the World are liable to the cavils of Men who employ their wits to do it; and certainly those ought not to stagger mens faith in matters of the highest nature and consequence, which would not at all move them in other things.

But at last it is acknowledged by the Men who love to be called the Men of wit in this Age of ours, that there is a God and Providence, a future state, and the differences of good and evil, but the Christian Religion they will see no further reason to imbrace than as it is the Religion of the State they live in. But if we demand what might-

ty reasons they are able to bring forth against a Religion so holy and innocent in its design, so agreeable to the Nature of God and Man, so well contrived for the advantages of this and another life, so fully attested to come from God by the Miracles wrought in confirmation of it, by the death of the Son of God, and of such multitudes of Martyrs, so certainly conveyed to us, by the unquestionable Tradition of all Ages since the first delivery of it; the utmost they can pretend against it is, that it is built upon such an appearance of the Son of God which was too mean and contemptible, that the Doctrine of it is inconsistent with the Civil Interests of Men, and the Design ineffectual for the Reformation of the World. For the removal therefore of these cavils against our Religion, I shall shew,

1. That there were no circumstances in our Saviours appearance or course of life, which were unbecoming the Son of God, and the design he came upon.

2. That the Doctrine delivered by him is so far from being contrary to the Civil Interests of the World, that it tends highly to the preservation of them.

3. That the design he came upon was very agreeable to the Infinite Wisdom of God, and most effectual for the Reformation of Mankind.

For clearing the first of these, I shall consider, (1.) The Manner of our Saviours appearance. (2.) The Course of his Life; and what it is was which his enemies did most object against him.

1. The manner of our Saviours Appearance; which hath been always the great offence to the admirers of the pomp and greatness of this World. For when they heard of the Son of God coming down from Heaven, and making his Progress into this lower World, they could imagine nothing less, than that an innumerable company of Angels must have been dispatched before, to have prepared a place for his reception; that all the Sovereigns and Princes of the World must have been summoned to give their attendance and pay their homage to him: that their Scepters must have been immediately laid at his feet, and all the Kingdoms of the Earth been united into one universal Monarchy under the Empire of the Son of God: That the Heavens should bow down at his presence to shew their obedience to him, the Earth tremble and shake for fear at the near approaches of his Majesty; that all the Clouds should clap together in one universal Thunder, to welcome his appearance, and tell the Inhabitants of the World what cause they had to fear him whom the Powers of the Heavens obey: that the Sea should run out of its wonted course with amazement and horror; and if it were possible, hide it self in the hollow places of the earth: that the Mountains should shrink in their heads, to fill up the vast places of the deep; so that all that should be fulfilled in a literal sense, which was foretold of the coming of the *Messias*, \* *That every Valley should be filled, and every Mountain and Hill brought low; the crooked made straight, and the rough ways smooth, and all flesh see the Salvation of God.* Yea, that the Son for a time should be darkned, and the Moon withdraw her light, to let the Nations of the Earth understand that a Glory infinitely greater than theirs did now appear to the World. In a Word, they could not imagine the Son of God could be born without the pangs and throws of the whole Creation; that it was as impossible for him to appear, as for the Sun in the Firmament to disappear, without the notice of the whole World. But when instead of all his  
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\* Luke 3.  
5, 6.

pomp and grandeur he comes *incognito* into the World, instead of giving notice of his appearance to the Potentates of the Earth, he is only discovered to a few silly Shepherds and three Wise Men of the East; instead of choosing either *Rome* or *Hierusalem* for the place of his Nativity, he is born at *Bethleem*, a mean and obscure Village: Instead of the glorious and magnificent Palaces of the East or West, which were at that time so famous; he is brought forth in a Stable, where the Manger was his Cradle, and his Mother the only attendant about him: who was her self none of the great persons of the Court, nor of any fame in the Country; but was only rich in her Genealogy, and honourable in her Pedigree. And according to the obscurity of his Birth was his Education too: his Youth was not spent in the Imperial Court at *Rome*, nor in the Schools of the great Rabbies at *Jerusalem*: but at *Nazareth*, a place of mean esteem among the *Jews*, where he was remarkable for nothing so much as the Vertues proper to his Age, Modesty, Humility and Obedience. All which he exercises to so high a degree, that his greatest kindred and acquaintance were mightily surprized when at 30 years of age, he began to discover himself by the Miracles which he wrought, and the Authority which he spake with. And although the rayes of his Divinity began to break forth through the Clouds he had hitherto disguised himself in, yet he persisted still in the same course of humility and self-denial; taking care of others to the neglect of himself; feeding others by a Miracle, and fasting himself, to one: Shewing his power in working miraculous Cures, and his humility in concealing them: Conversing with the meanest of the People, and choosing such for his Apostles, who brought nothing to recommend them but innocency and simplicity. Who by their heats and ignorance were continual exercises of his patience in bearing with them, and of his care and tenderneſs in instructing them. And after a life thus led with such unparalle'd humility, when he could add nothing more to it by his actions, he doth it by his sufferings; and compleats the sad Tragedy of his Life by a most shameful and ignominious Death. This is the short and true account of all those things which the admirers of the greatness of this World think mean and contemptible in our Saviours appearance here on earth. But we are now to consider whether so great humility were not more agreeable with the design of his coming into the World, than all that pomp and state would have been which the Son of God might have more easily commanded than we can imagine. He came not upon so mean an errand, as to dazle the eyes of Mankind with the brightness of his Glory, to amaze them by the terribleness of his Majesty, much less to make a shew of the riches and gallantry of the World to them: But he came upon far more noble and excellent designs, to bring life and immortality to light, to give men the highest assurance of an eternal happiness and misery in the World to come, and the most certain directions for obtaining the one, and avoiding the other: and in order to that, nothing was judged more necessary by him, than to bring the Vanities of this World out of that credit and reputation they had gained among foolish Men. Which he could never have done, if he had declaimed never so much against the vanity of worldly greatness, riches and honours, if in the mean time himself had lived in the greatest splendour and bravery. For the enjoying then the contempt of this World to his Disciples in hopes of a better, would have looked like the commendation of the excellency of fasting.

at a full meal, and of the conveniences of poverty by one who makes the greatest haste to be rich. That he might not therefore seem to offer so great a contradiction to his Doctrine by his own example, he makes choice of a life so remote from all suspicion of designs upon this World, that *though the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, yet the Son of Man, who was the Lord and Heir of all things, had not whereon to lay his head.* And as he shewed by his Life how little he valued the great things of the World, so he discovered by his death how little he feared the evil things of it: all which he did with a purpose and intention to rectifie the great mistakes of Men as to these things: That they might no longer venture an eternal happiness for the splendid and glorious vanities of this present life; nor expose themselves to the utmost miseries of another World, to avoid the frowns of this. From hence proceeded that generous contempt of the World, which not only our Saviour himself, but all his true Disciples of the first Ages of Christianity were so remarkable for; to let others see they had greater things in their eye than any here, the hopes of which they would not part with for all that this World thinks great or desirable. So that considering the great danger most Men are in, by too passionate a love of these things, and that universal and infinite kindness which our Saviour had to the Souls of Men; there was nothing he could discover it more in as to his appearance in the World, than by putting such an affront upon the greatness and honour of it, as he did by so open a neglect of it in his life, and despising it in his death and sufferings. And who now upon any pretence of reason dare entertain the meaner apprehensions of our Blessed Saviour because he appeared without the pomp and greatness of the World, when the reason of his doing so was, that by his own humility and self-denial he might shew us the way to an eternal happiness? Which he well knew how very hard it would be for Men to attain to, who measure things not according to their inward worth and excellency, but the splendour and appearance which they make to the World: who think nothing great but what makes them gazed upon; nothing desirable but what makes them flattered. But if they could be once perswaded how incomparably valuable the glories of the life to come are above all the gayeties and shews of this; they would think no condition mean or contemptible, which led to so great an end; none happy or honourable which must so soon end in the grave, or be changed to eternal misery. And that we might entertain such thoughts as these are, not as the melancholy effects of discontent and disappointments, but as the serious result of our most deliberate enquiry into the value of things, was the design of our Saviour in the humility of his appearance, and of that excellent Doctrine which he recommended to the World by it. Were I to argue the case with Philosophers, I might then at large shew from the free acknowledgments of the best and most experienced of them, that nothing becomes so much one who designs to recommend Vertue to the World, as a real and hearty contempt of all the pomp of it, and that the meanest condition proceeding from such a principle is truly and in it self more honourable, than living in the greatest splendour imaginable. Were I to deal with the *Jews*, I might then prove, that as the Prophecies concerning the *Messias* speak of great and wonderful effects of his coming, so that they should be accomplished in a way of suffering and humility. But since I speak to Christians, and therefore to those who were perswaded

fwaded of the great kindness and love of our Saviour in coming into the World, to reform it, and that by convincing men of the truth and excellency of a future state, no more need to be said to vindicate the appearance of him from that meanness and contempt, which the pride and ambition of vain Men is apt to cast upon it.

2. But not only our Saviour's manner of Appearance, but the manner of his Conversation gave great offence to his enemies, *viz.* That it was too free and familiar among persons who had the meanest reputation, *the Publicans and Sinners*; and in the mean time declaimed against the strictest observers of the greatest rigours and austerities of life. And this no doubt was one great cause of the mortal hatred of the *Pharisees* against him, though least pretended, that even thereby they might make good that charge of Hypocrisie which our Saviour so often draws up against them. And no wonder, if such severe rebukes did highly provoke them, since they found this so gainful and with all so easie a trade among the people, when with a demure look and a sower countenance they could cheat and defraud their Brethren; and under a specious shew of Devotion could break their fasts by devouring Widows houses, and end their long Prayers to God with acts of the highest injustice to their Neighbours. As though all that while, they had been only begging leave of God to do all the mischief they could to their Brethren. It is true, such as these were, our Saviour upon all occasions speaks against with the greatest sharpness, as being the most dangerous enemies to true Religion: and that which made men, whose passion was too strong for their reason, abhor the very name of Religion, when such baseness was practised under the profession of it. When they saw Men offer to compound with Heaven for all their injustice and oppression, with not a twentieth part of what God challenges as his due; they either thought Religion to be a meer device of Men, or that these Mens hypocrisie ought to be discovered to the World. And therefore our Blessed Saviour, who came with a design to retrieve a true spirit of Religion among Men, finds it first of all necessary to unmask those notorious hypocrites, that their deformities being discovered, their ways as well as their persons might be the better understood and avoided. And when he saw by the mighty opinion they had of themselves, and their uncharitableness towards all others, how little good was to be done upon them, he seldom vouchsafes them his presence; but rather converses with those who being more openly wicked were more easily convinced of their wickedness, and perswaded to reform. For which end alone it was that he so freely conversed with them, to let them see there were none so bad, but his kindness was so great to them, that he was willing to do them all the good he could: And therefore this could be no more a just reproach to Christ, that he kept company sometimes with these, than it is to a Chyrurgion to visit Hospitals, or to a Physician to converse with the Sick.

2. But when they saw that his Greatness did appear in another way, by the Authority of his Doctrine, and the Power of his Miracles, then these wise and subtle Men apprehend a further reach and design in all his actions: *Viz.* That this low condition was a piece of Popularity, and a meer disguise to ensnare the people, the better to make them in love with his Doctrine, and so by degrees to season them with Principles of Rebellion and Disobedience: Hence came all  
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the clamours of his being *an Enemy to Caesar*; and calling himself *the King of the Jews*, and of his design to erect a Kingdom of his own, all which they interpret in the most malicious though most unreasonable sense. For nothing is so politick as malice and ill-will, for that finds designs in every thing; and the more contrary they are to all the Protestations of the persons concerned, the deeper that suggests presently they are laid, and that there is the more cause to be afraid of them. Thus it was in our Blessed Saviour's case; it was not the greatest care used by him to shew his Obedience to the Authority he lived under, it was not his most solemn disavowing having any thing to do with their civil Interests, not the severe checks he gave his own Disciples for any ambitious thoughts among them, not the recommending the Doctrine of Obedience to them, nor the rebuke he gave one of his most forward Disciples for offering to draw his Sword in the rescue of himself, could abate the fury and rage of his enemies, but at last they condemn the greatest Teacher of the Duty of Obedience as a Traytor, and the most unparallel'd example of innocency as a Malefactor. But though there could be nothing objected against the life and actions of our Blessed Saviour, as tending to sedition and disturbance of the Civil Peace, yet that, these Men (who were inspir'd by malice, and prophesied according to their own interest) would say, was because he was taken away in time, before his designs could be ripe for action, but if his Doctrine tended that way, it was enough to justify their proceedings against him. So then, it was not what he did, but what he might have done: not Treason but Convenience which made them take away the life of the most innocent Person: but if there had been any taint in his Doctrine that way, there had been reason enough in such an Age of faction and sedition to have used the utmost care to prevent the spreading it. But so far is this from the least ground of probability, that it is not possible to imagine a Religion which aims less at the present particular interests of the embracers of it, and more at the publick interests of Princes than Christianity doth, as it was both preached and practised by our Saviour and his Apostles.

And here we have cause to lament the unhappy fate of Religion when it falls under the censure of such who think themselves the Masters of all the little arts whereby this world is governed. If it teaches the Duty of Subjects, and the Authority of Princes, if it requires obedience to Laws, and makes mens happiness or misery in another life in any measure to depend upon it; then Religion is suspected to be a meer trick of State, and an invention to keep the world in awe, whereby Men might the better be moulded into Societies, and preserved in them. But if it appear to inforce any thing indispensably on the Consciences of Men, though humane Laws require the contrary; if they must not forswear their Religion, and deny him whom they hope to be saved by, when the Magistrate calls them to it, then such half-witted Men think that Religion is nothing but a pretence to Rebellion, and Conscience only an obstinate plea for Disobedience. But this is to take it for granted that there is no such thing as Religion in the World; for if there be, there must be some inviolable Rights of Divine Sovereignty acknowledged, which must not vary according to the diversity of the Edicts and Laws of Men. But supposing the profession and practice of the Christian Religion to be allowed inviolable, there was never any Religion, nay, never any inventions of the greatest Politicians,

cians, which might compare with that for the preservation of civil Societies. For this in plain and express words tells all the owners of it, that they must live in subjection and obedience; \* *not only for wrath, but for Conscience sake; that they who do resist receive unto themselves damnation, and that because whosoever resisteth the Power, resisteth the Ordinance of God.* <sup>\* Rom. 13. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.</sup> Than which it is impossible to conceive arguments of greater force to keep men in obedience to Authority; for he that only obeys because it is his interest to do so, will have the same reason to disobey when there is an apprehension that may make more for his advantage. But when the reason of obedience is derived from the concerns of another life, no hopes of interest in this World can be thought to ballance the loss which may come by such a breach of duty in that to come. So that no persons do so dangerously undermine the foundations of civil Government, as those who magnifie that to the contempt of Religion; none so effectually secure them as those *who give to God the things that are Gods, and by doing so, are obliged to give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsars.* This was the Doctrine of Christianity as it was delivered by the first Author of it; and the practice was agreeable, as long as Christianity preserved its primitive honour in the World. For, so far were men then from making their zeal for Religion a pretence to Rebellion, that though Christianity were directly contrary to the Religions then in vogue in the World, yet they knew of no other way of promoting it, but by patience, humility, meekness, prayers for their persecutors, and tears when they saw them obstinate. So far were they then from fomenting suspicions and jealousies concerning the Princes and Governours they lived under, that though they were generally known to be some of the worst of Men as well as of Princes, yet they charge all Christians in the strictest manner, as they lov'd their Religion and the honour of it, as they valued their souls and the salvation of them, that they should be subject to them. So far were they then from giving the least encouragement to the usurpations of the rights of Princes under the pretence of any power given to a Head of the Church; that there is no way for any to think they meant it, unless we suppose the Apostles such mighty Politicians, that it is because they say nothing at all of it; but on the contrary, *bid every soul be subject to the higher powers;* tho' an Apostle, Evangelist, Prophet, whatever he be, as the Fathers interpret it. Yea so constant and uniform was the Doctrine and Practice of Obedience in all the first and purest ages of the Christian Church, that no one instance can be produced of any usurpation of the rights of Princes under the pretence of any title from Christ, or any disobedience to their Authority, under the pretence of promoting Christianity, through all those times wherein Christianity the most flourished, or the Christians were the most persecuted. And it had been happy for us in these last Ages of the World, if we had been Christians on the same terms which they were in the Primitive times; then there had been no such scandals raised by the degeneracy of men upon the most excellent and peaceable Religion in the World, as though that were unquiet and troublesome, because so many have been so who have made shew of it. But let their pretences be never so great to Infallibility on one side, and to the Spirit on the other, so far as men encourage faction and disobedience, so far they have not the Spirit of Christ and Christianity, and therefore are none of his. For he shewed his great wisdom in

contriving such a method of saving mens souls in another World, as tended most to the preservation of the peace and quietness of this ; and though this Wisdom may be evil spoken of by men of restless and unpeaceable minds, yet it will be still justified by all who have heartily embraced the Wisdom which is from above, who are pure and peaceable as that Wisdom is, and such, and only such are the Children of it.

3. I come to shew, That the design of Christ's appearance was very agreeable to the infinite Wisdom of God ; and that the means were very suitable and effectual for carrying on of that design for the reformation of Mankind.

1. That the design it self was very agreeable to the infinite Wisdom of God. What could we imagine more becoming the Wisdom of God, than to contrive a way for the recovery of lapsed and degenerate Mankind? Who more fit to employ upon such a message as this, than the Son of God? For his coming gives the greatest assurance to the Minds of Men, that God was serious in the management of this design, than which nothing could be of greater importance in order to the success of it. And how was it possible he should give a greater testimony of himself and withal of the purpose he came about, than he did when he was in the World? The accomplishment of Prophecies, and power of Miracles shewed who he was ; the nature of his Doctrine, and the manner of his Conversation, the greatness of his Sufferings, shewed what his design was in appearing among Men ; for they were all managed with a peculiar respect to the convincing Mankind, that God was upon terms of mercy with them, and had therefore sent his Son into the World, that he might not only obtain the pardon of sin for those who repent, but eternal life for all them that obey him. And what is there now we can imagine so great and desirable as this, for God to manifest his Wisdom in? It is true, we see a great discovery of it in the works of Nature, and might do in the methods of Divine Providence if partiality and interest did not blind our eyes ; but both these, though great in themselves, yet fall short of the contrivance of bringing to an eternal happiness Man who had fallen from his Maker, and was perishing in his own folly. Yet this is that which men in the pride and vanity of their own imaginations either think not worth considering, or consider as little as if they thought so ; and in the mean time think themselves very wise too. The *Jews* had the wisdom of their Traditions which they gloried in, and despised the Son of God himself when he came to alter them. The *Greeks* had the wisdom of their Philosophy which they so passionately admir'd, that whatever did not agree with that, though infinitely more certain and useful, was on that account rejected by them. The *Romans* ; after the Conquest of so great a part of the World, were grown all such Politicians and Statesmen, that few of them could have leisure to think of another World, who were so busie in the management of this. And some of all these sorts do yet remain in the World, which makes so many so little think of, or admire this infinite discovery of divine Wisdom : nay, there are some who can mix all these together ; joining a *Jewish* obstinacy, with the pride and self-opinion of the *Greeks*, to a *Roman* unconcernedness about the matters of another life. And yet upon a true and just enquiry never any Religion could be found, which could more fully satisfy the expectation of the *Jews*, the reason  
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of the *Greeks*, or the wisdom of the *Romans*, than that which was made known by Christ, *who was the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God*. Here the *Jew* might find his *Messias* come, and the Promises fulfilled which related to him; here the *Greek* might find his long and vainly look'd for certainty of a life to come, and the way which leads to it; here the *Roman* might see a Religion serviceable to another World and this together. Here are Precepts more holy, Promises more certain, Rewards more desirable than ever the Wit or Invention of Men could have attained to. Here are Institutions far more pious, useful and serviceable to Mankind, than the most admired Laws of the famous Legislators of *Greece* or *Rome*. Here are no popular designs carried on, no vices indulged for the publick interest, which *Solon*, *Lycurgus* and *Plato* are charged with. Here is no making Religion a meer trick of State, and a thing only useful for governing the people, which *Numa* and the great men at *Rome* are liable to the suspicion of. Here is no wrapping up Religion in strange figures and mysterious non-sense, which the *Egyptians* were so much given to. Here is no inhumanity and cruelty in the Sacrifices offer'd, no looseness and profaneness allowed in the most solemn mysteries, no worshipping of such for Gods who had not been fit to live if they had been Men, which were all things so commonly practis'd in the Idolatries of the Heathens. But the nature of the Worship is such as the minds of those who come to it ought to be, and as becomes that God whom we profess to serve, pure and holy, grave and serious, solemn and devout, without the mixtures of superstition, vanity or ostentation. The precepts of our Religion are plain and easie to be known, very suitable to the Nature of Mankind, and highly tending to the advantage of those who practice them, both in this and a better life. The arguments to persuade men are the most weighty and powerful, and of as great importance, as the love of God, the death of his Son, the hopes of happiness, and fears of eternal misery, can be to men. And wherein is the contrivance of our Religion defective; when the end is so desirable, the means so effectual for the obtaining of it?

2. Which is the next thing to be considered. There are two things which in this degenerate state of Man are necessary in order to the recovery of his happiness: and those are Repentance for sins past, and sincere Obedience for the future: now both these the Gospel gives men the greatest encouragements to, and therefore is the most likely to effect the design it was intended for.

1. For Repentance for sins past. What more powerful motives can there be to persuade men to repent, than for God to let men know that he is willing to pardon their sins upon the sincerity of their Repentance, but without that, there remains nothing but a fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation? That their sins are their follies, and therefore to repent is to grow wise: that he requires no more from men, but what every considerative man knows is fitting to be done whenever he reflects upon his actions: that there can be no greater ingratitude or disingenuity towards the Son of God than to stand at defiance with God when he hath shed his Blood to reconcile God and Man to each other: that every step of his humiliation, every part of the Tragedy of his Life, every wound at his death, every groan and sigh which he uttered upon the Cross, were designed by him as the most prevailing Rhetorick, to persuade men to forsake their sins,

and be happy: that there cannot be a more unaccountable folly, than by impenitency to lose the hopes of a certain and eternal happiness for the sake of those pleasures which every wise Man is ashamed to think of: that to continue in sin with the hopes to repent, is to stab a man's self with the hopes of a Cure: that the sooner men do it, the sooner they will find their minds at ease, and that the pleasures they enjoy in forsaking their sins, are far more noble and manly than ever they had in committing them: but if none of these arguments will prevail with them, perish they must, and that unavoidably, insupportably, and irrecoverably: And if such arguments as these will not prevail with men to leave their sins, it is impossible that any should.

\* Titus  
2. 12.

2. For Holiness of Life: For Christ did not come into the World, and dye for us, merely that we should repent of what is past, \* *by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, but that we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World.* And what he doth expect, he hath given the greatest encouragements to perform: by the clearness of his precepts, the excellency of his own example, the promise of his Grace, and the proposition of eternal rewards and punishments, whereby he takes off all the objections men are apt to make against obedience to the Commands of Christ: the pretence of ignorance, because his Laws are so clear; the pretence of impossibility by his own example; the pretence of infirmity by the assistance of his Grace; the pretence of the unnecessariness of so great care of our actions by making eternal rewards and punishments to depend upon it. Let us then reflect upon the whole design of the Gospel, and see how admirably it is suited to the end it was intended for, to the condition of those whose good was design'd by it, and to the whole honour of the great contriver and manager of it. And let not us by our impenitency and the unholiness of our lives, dishonour God and our Saviour, reproach our Religion, and condemn that by our Lives which we justify by our Words. For when we have said all we can, the best and most effectual vindication of Christian Religion is to live according to it: But oh then how unhappy are we that live in such an Age wherein it were hard to know that men were Christians, unless we are bound to believe their Words against the tenour and course of their Actions! What is become of the purity, the innocency, the candor, the peaceableness, the sincerity and devotion of the Primitive Christians! What is become of their zeal for the honour of Christ and Christian Religion! If it were the design of Men, to make our Religion a dishonour and reproach to the *Jews, Mahumetans, and Heathens*, could they do it by more effectual means than they have done? Who is there that looks into the present state of the Christian World, could ever think that the Christian Religion was so incomparably beyond all others in the World? Is the now *Christian Rome* so much beyond what it was while it was *Heathen*? Nay, was it not then remarkable in its first times for justice, sincerity, contempt of riches, and a kind of generous honesty, and who does not (though of the same Religion, if he hath any ingenuity left) lament the want of all those things there now? Will not the sobriety of the very *Turks* upbraid our excesses and debaucheries? and the obstinacy of the *Jews* in defence and practice of their Religion, condemn our coldness and indifferency in ours? If we have then any tenderness for the honour of

of our Religion, or any kindness for our own Souls, let us not only have the Name, but let us lead the lives of Christians; let us make amends for all the reproaches which our Religion hath suffered by the faction and disobedience of some, by the oaths and blasphemies, the impieties and profaneness of others, by the too great negligence and carelessness of all, that if it be possible, Christianity may appear in its true glory, which will then only be, when those *who name the Name of Christ depart from iniquity, and live in all manner of holy conversation and godliness.*

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# SERMON IV.

Preached at

## WHITE-HALL.

ROMANS I. 16.

*For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

**T**Hese Words are uttered by one who was himself a remarkable instance of the truth of the Doctrine contained in them, *viz.* of that divine Power which did accompany the Gospel of Christ. For what can we imagine else should make him now *not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ* who not long before was not ashamed to persecute all those who professed it? One, whose spirit was fermented with the leaven of the *Pharisees*, and enraged with fury against all who owned the Name of Christ, is of a sudden turned quite into another temper, to the confusion of those who employed him, and the amazement of them whom he designed to persecute. Nay, so great was the change which was wrought in him, that from a Bigot of the *Jewish* Religion he becomes an Apostle of the *Christian*, and from breathing flames against the Christians, none more ready than he to undergo them for Christ. If he had only given over his persecution, it might have been thought, that he had merely run himself out of breath, and grown weary of his former fury, (as greater persons than he did afterwards) but to retain the same fervor of spirit in preaching Christ, which he had before in opposing him, to have as great zeal for making Christians, as he had for destroying them, must needs proceed from some great and unusual cause. Whilst the *Jews* thought he had too much learning and interest to become their enemy, and the Christians found he had too much rage and fury to be their friend, even then when they least expected it, instead of continuing an Instrument of the *Sandredin* for punishing the Christians, he declared himself an Apostle and Servant of Jesus Christ. And that no ordinary one neither: for such was the efficacy of those divine Words, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me*, that they not only presently allay his former heat, but quicken and animate him to a greater zeal for the honour of him whom he had persecuted before. And the faster he had run when he was out of his way, the greater diligence he used when he found it, there being none of all the followers of Christ who out-strip him in his constant endeavours

to advance the Christian Religion in the World. And if an unwearied diligence to promote it, an uncessant care for preserving it, an universal concern for all who owned it, and an undaunted spirit in bearing the affronts and injuries he underwent for it, be any persuasive arguments of the love a man bears to his Religion, there was never any person who made a clearer demonstration than *St. Paul* did of the truth of his Religion, and his sincerity in embracing it. For his endeavours were suitable to the greatness of his spirit, his care as large as the Horizon of the Son of righteousness, his courage as great as the malice of his enemies. For he was neither afraid of the Malice of the *Jews*, or of the Wisdom of the *Greeks*, or of the Power of the *Romans*, but he goes up and down preaching the Gospel in a sphere as large as his mind was, and with a zeal only parallel with his former fury. He encountred the *Jews* in their Synagogues, he disputed with the *Greeks* in their most famous Cities, at *Athens*, *Corinth*, *Ephesus*, and elsewhere, and every where raising some Trophies to the honour of the Gospel; nothing now remained but that he should do the same at *Rome* also. And for this he wants not spirit and resolution, for *he even longed to be there*, vers. 11. *nay, he had often purposed to go thither*, but waited for a convenient opportunity, v. 13. But while God was pleased otherwise to dispose of him, he could not conceal the joy which he had for the ready entertainment of the Christian Religion by those to whom he writes, and that their faith was grown as famous as the City wherein they dwelt, v. 8. *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ, for you all, that your Faith is spoken of throughout the whole World:* and he further manifests the greatness of his affection to them, *that without ceasing he made mention of them always in his Prayers*, v. 9. And among the rest of the blessings he prayed for, for himself and them; he was sure not to forget *his coming to them*, v. 10. Not out of an ambitious and vain-glorious humour that he might be taken notice of in that great and imperial City, but that he might be instrumental in doing them service as he had done others, v. 11, 13. And to this end he tells them, what an obligation lay upon him to spread the Doctrine of Christ in all places and to all persons, v. 14. *I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise.* So that neither the wisdom of the *Greeks*, nor the ignorance of the *Barbarians* could hinder *St. Paul* from discovering to them the contrivances of infinite wisdom; and the excellent methods of divine Goodness in order to mens eternal welfare. And although *Rome* now thought it self to be the seat of Wisdom as well as Empire and Power, yet our Apostle declares *his readiness to preach the Gospel there too*, v. 15. for which he gives a sufficient reason in the Words of the Text; *For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to Salvation, &c.* Wherein we have considerable these two things, 1. The Apostle's boldness and freeness in declaring the Doctrine of Christ, *For I am not ashamed, &c.* 2. The ground of it in the following words, *for it is the power of God to Salvation, &c.*

1. The Apostles boldness and freeness in Declaring the Doctrine of Christ. It was neither the gallantry of the *Roman* Court, nor the splendor of the City, nor the greatness of her Power, or Wisdom of her Statesmen could make *St. Paul* entertain the meaner opinion of the Doctrine he hoped to preach among them. Had Christ come *μετὰ πολλῆς ἑνταυτοῦ*, with a great deal of pomp and state into the World, sub-

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duing Kingdoms and Nations under him; had St. *Paul* been a General for the Gospel instead of being an Apostle of it, the great men of the World would then allow he had no cause to be ashamed either of his Master, or of his employment. But to preach a crucified Saviour among the glories and triumphs of *Rome*, and a Doctrine of so much simplicity and contempt of the World among those who were the Masters of it, and managed it with so much art and cunning; to persuade them to be followers of Christ in a holy life, who could not be like the gods they worshipped, unless they were guilty of the greatest debaucheries, seems to be an employment so liable to the greatest scorn and contempt, that none but a great and resolved spirit would ever undertake it. For when we consider after so many hundred years profession of Christianity, how apt the greatness of the world is to make men ashamed of the practice of it; and that men aim at a reputation for wit by being able to abuse the Religion they own; what entertainment might we then think our Religion met with among the great men of the Age it was first preached in, when it not only encountered those weaker weapons of scoffs and raillery, but the strong holds of interest and education? If our Religion now can hardly escape the bitter scoffs, and profane jests of men who pawn their souls to be accounted witty, what may we think it suffered then, when it was accounted a part of their own Religion to despise and reproach ours? If in the Age we live in, a man may be reproached for his piety and virtue, that is, for being really a Christian, when all profess themselves to be so, what contempt did they undergo in the first Ages of the Christian World, when the very name Christian was thought a sufficient brand of infamy? And yet such was the courage and magnanimity of the Primitive Christians, that what was accounted most mean and contemptible in their Religion, *viz.* their believing in a crucified Saviour, was by them accounted the matter of their greatest honour and glory. For though St. *Paul* only saith here that *he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ*, yet elsewhere he explains that *μὴ ἰδοὺ* which is contained in these words, when he saith, *God forbid that I should glory in any thing, save in the Cross of Christ, by whom the World is crucified to me, and I unto the World*, Gal. 6. 14. *i. e.* Altho' he could not but be sensible how much the World despised him, and his Religion together, yet that was the great satisfaction of his Mind, that his Religion had enabled him to despise the World as much. For neither the pomp and grandeur of the World, nor the smiles and flatteries of it, no nor its frowns and severities could abate any thing of that mighty esteem and value which he had for the Christian Religion. For in his own expression, *he accounted all things else but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord*, Phil. 3. 8. Which words are not spoken by one who was in despair of being taken notice of for any thing else, and therefore magnifies the profession he was engaged in; but by a person as considerable as most of the Time and Nation he lived in both for his birth and education. So that his contempt of the World was no sullen and affected severity, but the issue of a sober and impartial judgment; and the high esteem he professed of Christianity was no fanatick whimsy, but the effect of a diligent enquiry, and the most serious consideration. And that will appear,

2. By the grounds and reasons which St. *Paul* here gives why he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. 1. From the excellent end it was designed for, and that is no less than *Salvation*. 2. From the effectualness

alness of it in order to that end, *it is the power of God to Salvation.*  
 3. From the necessity of believing the Gospel by all who would attain that end; *to every one that believes, the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

1. From the excellent End it was designed for, the recovery and happiness of the souls of men, both which are implied in the term *salvation.* For, considering the present condition of humane Nature, as it is so far sunk beneath it self, and kept under the power of unruly passions; whatever tends to make it happy, must do it by delivering it from all those things which are the occasions of its misery. So that whatever Religion should promise to make men happy, without first making them vertuous and good, might on that very account be justly suspected of imposture. For the same reasons which make the acts of any Religion necessary, *viz.* that we may please that God, who commands and governs the World, must make it necessary for men to do it, in those things which are far more acceptable to him than all our sacrifices of what kind soever; which are the actions of true vertue and goodness. If then that accusation had been true, which *Celsus* and *Julian* charged Christianity with, *viz.* that it indulged men in the practice of vice, with the promise of a future happiness notwithstanding; I know nothing could have rendred it more suspicious to be a design to deceive Mankind. But so far is it from having the least foundation of truth in it, that as there never was any Religion which gave men such certain hopes of a future felicity, and consequently more encouragement to be good, so there was none ever required it on those strict and severe terms which Christianity doth. For there being two grand duties of men in this World, either towards God in the holiness of their hearts and lives, or towards their Brethren, in a peaceable carriage among men (which cannot be without justice and sobriety) both these are enforced upon all Christians, upon no meaner terms than the unavoidable loss of all the happiness our Religion promises. *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord,* Heb. 12. 14. This is then the grand design of Christianity, to make men happy in another World, by making them good and vertuous in this: It came to reform this World, that it might people another; so to purifie the souls of men, as to make them meet to enjoy the happiness designed for them. This is that *great Salvation* which the Gospel brings to the World, *Heb. 2. 3.* and thence it is called *the Word of Salvation,* Acts 13. 26. *the way of Salvation,* Acts 16. 17. *the Gospel of Salvation,* Ephes. 1. 13. So that though Christianity be of unspeakable advantage to this World, there being no Religion that tends so much to the peace of mens minds, and the preservation of civil Societies as this doth; yet all this it doth by way of subordination to the great end of it, which is the promoting mens eternal happiness. And the more we consider the vast consequence and importance of this end to Mankind, the greater reason we shall find that *St. Paul* had, *why he should not be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.* For can we imagine any end more noble that any Doctrine can aim at than this? Supposing the common Principles of all Religion to be true, *viz.* the Being of God, and Immortality of our Souls, there can be nothing more becoming that God to discover, or those Souls to be imployed about, than the way to a blessed immortality. And if we admire those discourses of the Heathen Philosophers, wherein they speak more darkly and ob-

scurely concerning those things, what admiration doth the Gospel deserve, which hath brought life and immortality to light? If we commend the vertuous Heathens, who according to those short and obscure notices which they had of God and themselves, sought to make the World any thing the better for their being in it, what infinitely greater esteem do those blessed Apostles deserve, who accounted not their own lives dear to them that they might make even their enemies happy? If those mens memories be dear to us who sacrifice their lives and fortunes for the sake of the Country they belong to, shall not those be much more so who have done it for the good of the whole world? Such who chearfully suffered death while they were teaching men the way to an eternal life, and who patiently endured the flames, if they might but give the greater light to the World by them. Such who did as far out-go any of the admired *Heroes* of the Heathens, as the purging the World from sin is of greater consequence than cleansing an *Augæan* Stable from the filth of it, and rescuing men from eternal flames is a more noble design than clearing a Country from Pyrats and Robbers. Nay, most of the Heathen Gods who were so solemnly worshipped in *Greece* and at *Rome*, owed their ἀποθέσει to such slender benefits to Mankind; that sure the World was very barbarous or hugely grateful, when they could think them no less than Gods who found out such things for men: If a Smith's forge, and a Woman's distaff, if teaching men the noble arts of fighting and cheating one another were such rare inventions, that they only became some of the most celebrated Deities, which the grave and demure *Romans* thought fit to worship; sure *St. Paul* had no cause to be ashamed of his Religion among them, who had so much reason to be ashamed of their own; since his design was to perswade them out of all the vanities and fooleries of their Idolatrous Worship, and to bring them to the service of the true and ever-living God, who had discovered so much goodness to the World in making his Son a propitiation for the sins of it. And was not this a discovery infinitely greater and more suitable to the nature of God, than any which the subtilty of the *Greeks*, or wisdom of the *Romans* could ever pretend to concerning any of their Deities? Thus we see the excellent end of our Religion was that which made *St. Paul* so far from being ashamed of it; and so it would do all us too, if we did understand and value it as *St. Paul* did. But it is the great dishonour of too many among us, that they are more ashamed of their Religion than they are of their sins. If to talk boldly against Heaven, to affront God in calling him to witness their great impieties by frequent oaths, to sin bravely and with the highest confidence, to mock at such who are yet more modest in their debaucheries, were not to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, we might find *St. Pauls* enough in the Age we live in, and it would be a piece of gallantry to be Apostles. But this is rather the utmost endeavour to put Religion out of countenance, and make the Gospel it self blush and be ashamed, that ever such bold-faced impieties should be committed by men under the profession of it, as though they believed nothing so damnable as Repentance and a Holy life, and no sin so unpardonable as Modesty in committing it. But to use *St. Paul's* language when he had been describing such persons himself, *Heb. 6. 9. We are perswaded better things of you, and things that accompany that Salvation the Gospel was designed for, though we thus speak.* For certainly nothing can argue a greater meanness of spirit, than while



while wicked and prophane persons are not ashamed of that which unavoidably tends to their ruine, and should be shy of the profession and practice of that which conduces to their eternal happiness. What is become of all that magnanimity and generous spirit which the Primitive Christians were so remarkable for, if while some are impudent in sinning, others are ashamed of being or doing good? If we have that value for our immortal souls and a future life, which we ought to have, we shall not trouble our selves much with the Atheistical scoffs and drollery of prophane persons, who while they deride and despise Religion, do but laugh themselves into eternal misery. And thus much for the first ground of *St. Paul's* confidence, *viz.* The excellent end the Gospel was design'd for.

2. The effectualness of it in order to that end. *It is the Power of God to Salvation.* Wherein two things are imply'd.

1. The inefficacy of any other Doctrine for that end.

2. The effectualness of the Gospel in order to it.

1. The inefficacy of any other Doctrine for this end of promoting the eternal Salvation of Mankind. If the World had been acquainted with any Doctrine before which had been sufficient for the purposes the Gospel was designed for, there would have been no such necessity of propagating it among men; nor had there been reason enough to have justified the Apostles in exposing themselves to so great hazards for the preaching of it. If the notion of an eternal God and Providence, without the knowledge of a *Saviour*, had been sufficient to reform the World, and make men happy; it had not been consistent with the wisdom or goodness of God to have employ'd so many persons, with the loss of their lives, to declare the Doctrine of Christ to the World. So that if Christianity be true, it must be thought necessary to salvation, for the necessity of it was declared by those who were the instruments of confirming the truth of it. I meddle not with the case of those particular persons who had no means or opportunity to know God's revealed will, and yet from the Principles of Natural Religion did reform their lives, in hopes of a future felicity (if any such there were) but whether there were not a necessity of such a Doctrine as the Gospel is to be discover'd to the World, in order to the reformation of it? For some very few persons either through the goodness of their natures, the advantage of their education, or some cause of a higher nature, may have led more vertuous lives than others did; but it is necessary, that what aims at the general good of Mankind, must be suited to the capacities of all, and enforced with arguments which may prevail on any but the most obstinate and wilful persons. But when we consider the state of the World at that time when Christianity was first made known to it, we may easily see how insufficient the Common Principles of Religion were from working a reformation in it, when notwithstanding them Mankind was so generally laps'd into Idolatry and Vice, that hardly any can be instanced in the Heathen World, who had escap'd both of them. And there was so near an affinity between both these; that they who were engag'd in the rites of their Idolatry, could hardly keep themselves free from the intanglements of vice; not only because many of their villanies were practis'd as part of their Religion, (and there was little hopes certainly of their being good, who could not be Religious without being bad) but because the very Gods they worship were represented to be as bad as themselves. And could

they take any better measure of Vertue, than from the actions of those whom they supposed to have so divine an excellency in them, as to deserve their adoration? So that if there were a design of planting wickedness in the World (which need not be, for it grows fast enough without it) it could not be done more successfully than by worshipping those for Gods, who did such things which good men would abhor to think of. And yet this was the State of the World then, when the Gospel was preached, and not only of the more rude and barbarous Nations, but of the most civilized and knowing People, as the *Romans* themselves; as our Apostle at large proves in the remainder of this Chapter, wherein he shews, that though they had means enough of knowing the Eternal God and Providence, yet they were so fallen into Idolatry, and the most vicious practices, that there was no means of recovering them, but by a fuller discovery both of the justice and goodness of God.

I know it will be here objected, that though the generality of men were bad then (as when were they otherwise) yet the Heathens had a kind of Apostles among them, *viz.* the Philosophers, who sought to amend the manners of men by the moral instructions they gave them; so that if men were bad, it was not for want of good counsel, but for not observing it, which is all (they say) we have to say for our selves, when we are charged with the great debaucheries of the Christian World.

To which I answer, that our business is not now to enquire whether there hath not been an incomparably greater advantage to the World by Christianity, in the reforming mens lives, than ever was by any of the *Heathen Morals*; but whether these, taking them in the fairest dress, were sufficient for the bringing men to eternal happiness, that there needed not any such Doctrine as Christianity, be published for that end? And there are two great things we may charge the best of their discourses with an insufficiency in, for the accomplishment of this end, which are Certainty, and Motives; or the want of Arguments to believe, and Encouragements to practice.

1. They were destitute of sufficient certainty; for what a man ventures his eternal state upon, he ought to be well assured of the truth of it. But how was it possible for the World to be reformed by such wise Apostles (if they must be called so) who are perpetually disputing among themselves about those things which were the most necessary foundations of all Vertue and Religion? As though the best Arguments they had to prove their Souls immortal, was because their Disputes about them were so. And those seemed among them to gain the greatest reputation for Wit, who were best able to dispute against common Principles; and they managed their business with greatest advantage, who only shewed the weakness of others principles, but established none of their own; which was an unavoidable consequence of the way they proceeded in, for offering at no such way of proof as Christianity doth, they rather taught Men to disputue, than to live eternally. Besides, their Discourses were too subtile and intricate for the common capacities of Men; how long might a Man live before an *Entelechia* would make him know the nature of his soul the better, or an *αὐτογνωσία* perswade him to believe its immortality? Infomuch that it is hard to determine, whether the arguments, used by them, did not rather hinder assent, than perswade to it? and it seems probable that the honest minded illiterate Heathens believed

lieved those things more firmly than the greatest Philosophers. For plain truths lose much of their weight, when they are rarify'd into subtilties, and their strength is impaired when they are spun into too fine a thread. The arguments which must prevail with Mankind, must be plain and evident, easie and yet powerful. The natural sense of good and evil in Men is oft-times dulled by disputes, and only awakned by a powerful representation of an infinite Being, and a future Judgment: and that by such a way of proof as all persons are equal Judges of the truth and validity of it; such as the Resurrection of Christ is in the Gospel.

2. But let us suppose the arguments certain and suitable, yet what sufficient motives or encouragements could they give to lead a holy and vertuous life, who after all their endeavours to perswade others, remain'd so uncertain themselves as to a future happiness? So *Tully* tells us of *Socrates* himself when he was just dying, *That he told his Friends, that only the Gods knew whether it was fitter for men to live or die, but he thought no man did.* And although some would excuse this as his usual way of disputing, yet of all times one would think it was fittest for him then declare his mind in the most exprefs terms, not only for the full vindication of himself, but for the comfort and encouragement of his Friends. We are sure, Christianity proceeds on those terms, that if a future happiness be supposed uncertain, it declares expressly there can be no sufficient reason given for men to part with the conveniencies of this present life; nay, it supposes *the best men to be the most miserable of all others, if there be not a future reward,* 1 Cor. 15. 19.—

32. Again, what probability was there they should ever perswade the World to vertue and goodness, when the severest of the Philosophers, made it lie in things so repugnant to humane nature, as goodness is agreeable to it. As when they made it an equal fault for a man to be angry, and to murder his Sovereign; and that all passions are to be destroyed, that pain and grief are nothing, that vertue in all conditions is a sufficient reward to it self: Which are so contrary to the common sense of Mankind, that the only way to perswade men to believe them, is first to perswade them they are not men. So that he was certainly the wisest man among the Heathens, who concluded, *that we ought to expect a higher Master to teach us these things,* and to acquaint us with the happiness of a future life. And hereby an answer may be given to *Porphyrus* grand objection against Christian Religion, *viz. If it were so necessary for the good of Mankind, why was it so long before it was discovered?* Because God would thereby discover the insufficiency of all the means the wit of man could find out to reform the World without this. That not only the *Jews* might see the weakness of that dispensation they were under, but the *Gentile* world might groan with an expectation of some more powerful means to goodness than were yet among them. For when Philosophy had been so long in its height, and had so little influence upon Mankind, it was time for the Son of righteousness to arise, and with the softning and healing influence of his beams to bring the World to a more vertuous temper.

And that leads to the Second thing implied, which is the peculiar efficacy of the Gospel for promoting mens salvation, *for it is the power of God to Salvation,* and that will appear, by considering how many ways *the power of God* is engaged in it. These three especially.

1. In confirmation of the Truth of it. 2. In the admirable Effects of it

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in the World. 3. In the Divine Assistance which is promised to those who embrace it.

1. In confirmation of the Truth of it. For the World was grown so uncertain, as to the grand Foundations of Religion, that the same power was requisite now to settle the World, which was at first for the framing of it. For though the Precepts of Christian Religion be pure and easie, holy and suitable to the sense of Mankind, though the Promises be great and excellent, proportionable to our wants and the weight of our business, though the reward be such that it is easier to desire than comprehend it, yet all these would but seem to baffle the more the expectations of Men, unless they were built on some extraordinary evidence of divine power. And such we assert there was in the confirmation of these things to us, not only in the miraculous birth of our Saviour, and that continual series of unparallel'd miracles in his life, not only in the most obliging circumstances of his death; not only in the large effusion of divine gifts upon his Apostles, and the strange propagation of Christian Religion by them against all humane power; but that which I shall particularly instance in, as the great effect of divine power, and confirmation of our Religion, was his Resurrection from the dead. For, as our Apostle saith, *Rom. i. 4. Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the Resurrection from the dead.* No way of evidence could be more suitable to the capacities of all, than this, it being a plain matter of fact; none ever better attested than this was, not only by the unanimous consent of all the witnesses, but by their constant adhering to the truth of it, though it cost almost all of them their lives; and no greater evidence could be given to the World of a divine power, since both *Jews* and *Gentiles* agreed in this, that such a thing could not be effected but by an immediate hand of God. So far were they then from thinking a Resurrection possible by the juice of herbs, or an infusion of warm blood into the veins, or by the breath of living Creatures, as the great Martyr for *Atheism* would seem from *Pliny* to persuade us; when yet certainly nothing can be of higher concernment to those who believe not another life, than to have tried this experiment long ere now; and since nothing of that nature hath ever happened since our Saviour's Resurrection, it only lets us know what credulous men in other things the greatest Infidels as to Religion are. But so far were they at that time from so fond an imagination, that they readily yielded, that none but God could do it, though they seem'd to question whether God himself could do it or no. As appears by the Apostle's Interrogation, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* *Act. 26. 8.* This was therefore judged on both sides to be a matter of so great importance, that all the disputes concerning Christian Religion were resolv'd into this, Whether Christ were risen from the dead? And this the Apostles urge and insist on, upon all occasions, as the great evidence of the truth of his Doctrine, and this was the main part of their Commission, for they were sent abroad to be *witnesses of his Resurrection.* Which was not designed by God as a thing strange and incredible to puzzle Mankind with, but to give the highest assurance imaginable to the World of the truth and importance of Christianity. Since God was pleas'd to imploy his power in so high a manner to confirm the certainty of it.

2. God's power was seen in the admirable effects of Christian Religion upon the minds of men : which was most discernable by the strange alteration it soon made in the state of the World. In *Judea* soon after the death of Christ, some of his Crucifiers become Christians, 3000 Converts made at one Sermon of St. *Peter's*, and great accessions made afterwards both in *Hierusalem* and other places. Yea, in all parts of the *Roman Empire*, where the Christians came, they so increased and multiplied, that thereby it appeared that God had given a Benediction to his new Creation suitable to what he gave to the first. So that within the compass of not a hundred Years after our Saviour's death, the World might admire to see it self so strangely changed from what it was. The Temple at *Hierusalem* destroyed, and the *Jews* under a sadder dispersion than ever, and rendred incapable of continuing their former Worship of God there, the Heathen Temples unfrequented, the Gods derided, the Oracles ceased, the Philosophers puzzled, the Magistrates disheartned by their fruitless cruelties, and all this done by a few Christians who came and preached to the World *Righteousness, Temperance, and a Judgment to come*, whereof God had given assurance to the World, by raising one *Jesus* from the dead. And all this effected not by the power of Wit and Eloquence, not by the force and violence of rebellious subjects, not by men of hot and giddy brains, but by men sober, just, humble and meek in all their carriages, but withal such as might never have been heard of in the World, had not this Doctrine made them famous. What could this then be imputed to less than a Divine Power, which by effectual and secret ways carries on its own design against all the force and wit of men. So that the wise *Gama-liel*, at whose feet St. *Paul* was bred, seem'd to have the truest apprehensions of these things at that time, when he told the *Sanhedrim*, *If this counsel, or this work be of men, it will come to nought, but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found to fight against God.* Act. 5. 38, 39.

3. In the Divine Assistance which is promised to those who embrace it: in which respect it is properly *the power of God to Salvation*; and therein far beyond what the Philosophers could promise to any who embraced their opinions. For, the Gospel doth not only discover the necessity of a Principle superiour to Nature, which we call *Grace*, in order to the fitting our souls for their future happiness, but likewise shews on what terms God is pleased to bestow it on men, *viz.* on the consideration of the death and passion of our Lord and Saviour. *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Christ our Saviour,* Titus 3. 5. There being nothing in humane Nature which could oblige God, to give to Mankind that assistance of his grace whereby they are enabled to work out this salvation the Gospel is designed for, with fear and trembling. The whole tenor of the Gospel importing a divine power which doth accompany the preaching of it, which is designed on purpose to heal the wounds, and help the weakness of our depraved and degenerate nature. Through which we may be *kept to salvation*: but it must be *through Faith*, 1 Pet. 1. 5.

3. Which is the last particular of the Words; the necessity of *believing the Gospel* in order to the partaking of the salvation promised in it, *it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believes, to the Jew*

Jew first, and also to the Greek. An easie way of Salvation, if no more were required to mens happiness but a fancy and strong opinion which they will easily call Believing. So there were some in *St. Augustin's* time, I could wish there were none in ours, who thought nothing necessary to salvation but a strong Faith, let their Lives be what they pleased. But this is so repugnant to the main design of Christian Religion, that they who think themselves the strongest Believers, are certainly the weakest, and most ungrounded. For they believe scarce any other proposition in the new Testament, but that *whosoever believeth shall be saved*. If they did believe that Christ came into the World to reform it, and make it better, that *the wrath of God is now revealed from Heaven against all unrighteousness*, as well as that *the just by Faith shall live*; that the design of all that love of Christ, which is shewn to the World, is *to deliver them from the hand of their enemies*, that they might serve him in righteousness and holiness all the days of their lives, they could never imagine, that salvation is entailed by the Gospel on a mighty confidence or vehement perswasion of what Christ hath done and suffer'd for them. And so far is *St. Paul* from asserting this, that as far as I can see, he never meddles with a matter of that nicety, whether a single act of Faith be the condition of our justification as it is distinguished from Evangelical obedience, but his discourse runs upon this subject; whether God will pardon the sins of men upon any other terms than those which are declared in the Christian Religion, the former he calls *Works*, and the latter *Faith*.

I know, the subtilty of later times hath made *St. Paul* dispute in the matter of justification, not as one bred up at the feet of *Gamaliel*, but of the *Master of the Sentences*; but men did not then understand their Religion at all the worse because it was plain and easie; and, it may be, if others since had understood their Religion better, there would never have needed so much subtilty to explain it, nor so many distinctions to defend it. The Apostle makes the same terms of justification and of salvation, for as he saith elsewhere, *\* We are justified by Faith*, he saith here, *the Gospel is the power of God to Salvation to every one that believes*; if therefore a single act of Faith be sufficient for one, why not for the other also? But if believing here be taken in a more large and comprehensive sense, as a complex act relating to our undertaking the conditions of the Gospel; why should it not be taken so in the subsequent discourse of the Apostle? For we are to observe that *St. Paul* in this Epistle is not disputing against any sort of Christians that thought to be sav'd by their obedience to the Gospel from the assistance of divine grace; but against those who thought the Grace and indulgence of the Gospel by no means necessary in order to the pardon of their sins, and their eternal happiness. Two things therefore the Apostle mainly designs to prove in the beginning of it: First, the insufficiency of any other way of salvation besides that offer'd by the Gospel; whether it were the light of Nature which the *Gentiles* contended for, but were far from living according to it; or that imaginary *Covenant of Works*, which the *Jews* fancied to themselves (for it will be a very hard matter to prove that ever God entred into a *Covenant of Works* with fallen Man, which he knew it was impossible for him to observe) but they were so highly opinionated of themselves, and of those legal observations which were among them, that they thought by vertue of them they could merit so much favour

favour at God's hands; that there was no need of any other sacrifice, but what was among themselves to expiate the guilt of all their sins: And on that account they rejected the Gospel, as the Apostle tells us, \* *that they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.* <sup>\* Rom. 10.</sup> Against these therefore the Apostle proves, that if they hoped for happiness upon such strict terms, they laid only a foundation of † *boasting* if they did all which God required, but of misery if † they did not; for them || *Cursed is every one that continues not in every thing written in the Law to do it; i. e.* if they failed in any one thing, † then they must fail of all all their hopes; but such a state of perfection being impossible to humane Nature, he shews, that either all Mankind must unavoidably perish, or they must be saved by the Grace and Favour of God, which he proves to be discovered by the Gospel: and that God will now accept of a hearty and sincere obedience to his will declared by his Son: so that all those who perform that, though they live not in the nice observance of the Law of *Moses*, shall not need to fear the penalty of their sins in another life. Which is the second thing he designs to prove, *viz.* That those who obeyed the Gospel, whether *Jew* or *Greek*, were equally capable of salvation by it. \* *For, saith he, Is God the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:* because both *Jew* and <sup>† Rom. 3.</sup> <sup>‡ Gal. 3. 10.</sup> <sup>§ 29.</sup> *Gentile* were to be justified upon the same terms, as he proves afterwards. So that God's justifying of us by the Gospel, is the solemn declaration of himself upon what terms he will pardon the sins of men; that is, deliver them from the penalties they have deserved by them. For the actual discharge of the person is reserved to the great day; all the justification we have here is only declarative from God, but so as to give a right to us, by vertue whereof we are assured, that God will not only not exercise his utmost rigour, but shew all favour and kindness to those, who by belief of the Gospel do repent and obey. God doth now remit sin as he forbears to punish it; he remits the sinner as he assures him by the death of Christ he will not punish upon his Repentance; but he fully remits both, when he delivers the person upon the tryal of the great day, from all the penalties which he hath deserved by his sins. So that our compleat justification and salvation go both upon the same terms, and the same Faith which is sufficient for one, must be sufficient for the other also.

What care then ought men to take, lest by misunderstanding the notion of *Believing*, so much spoken of as the condition of our salvation, they live in a neglect of that holy obedience which the Gospel requires, and so believe themselves into eternal misery. But as long as men make their obedience necessary, though but as the fruit and effect of Faith, it shall not want its reward: for those *whose hearts are purified by Faith* shall never be condemned for mistaking the notion of it; and they who live as those that are to be judged according to *their works*, shall not miss their reward, though they do not think they shall receive it *for them*. But such who make no other condition of the Gospel but *Believing*, and will scarce allow that to be called a Condition, ought to have a great care to keep their hearts sounder than their heads, for their only security will lie in this, that they are good though they see no necessity of being so. And such of all others, I grant, have reason to acknowledge the irresistible

power of Divine Grace, which enables them to obey the Will of God against the dictates of their own judgments. But thanks be to God, who hath so abundantly provided for all the infirmities of humane Nature, by the large offers of his Grace, and assistance of his Spirit, that though we meet with so much opposition without, and so much weakness within, and so many discouragements on every side of us; yet if we sincerely apply our selves to do the Will of God, we have as great assurance as may be, that *we shall be kept by the power of God through Faith unto Salvation.*

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# SERMON V.

Preached at

## WHITE-HALL.

HEBREWS II. 3.

*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?*

**W**hen the wise and eternal Counsels of Heaven, concerning the salvation of Mankind by the death of the Son of God, were first declared to the World by his own appearance and preaching in it; nothing could be more reasonably expected, than that the dignity of his Person, the authority of his Doctrine, and the excellency of his Life, should have perswaded those whom he appeared among, to such an admiration of his Person, and belief of his Doctrine, as might have led them to an imitation of him in the holiness of his life and conversation. For if either the worth of the Person, or the Importance of the Message might prevail any thing towards a kind and honourable reception among men; there was never any person appeared in any degree comparable to him, never any Message declared which might challenge so welcome an entertainment from men, as that was which he came upon. If to give Mankind the highest assurance of a state of life and immortality, if to offer the pardon of sin, and reconciliation with God upon the most easie and reasonable terms, if to purge the degenerate World from all its impurities by a Doctrine as holy as the Author of it; were things as becoming the Son of God to reveal, as the Sons of men to receive: nothing can be more unaccountable than that his Person should be despised, his Authority slighted, and his Doctrine contemned. And that by those whose interest was more concerned in the consequence of these things, than himself could be in all the affronts and injuries he underwent from men: For the more the indignities the greater the shame, the sharper the sufferings which he did undergo, the higher was the honour and glory which he was advanced to: but the more obliging the instances of his kindness were, the greater the salvation that was tendered by him; the more prevailing the motives were for the entertainment of his Doctrine, the more exemplary and severe will the punishment be of all those who reject it. For it is very agreeable to those eternal Laws of Justice by which God governs the world, that the punishment should arise proportionably to the greatness of the mercies despised: and therefore although the Scripture be very sparing in telling us what the state of those persons shall be in another life who never heard of the Gospel; yet for those who do, and despise it, it tells us plainly, that an eternal misery is the just desert of those to whom an eternal happiness was offered, and yet neglected by them.

Mat. 11.  
23.

And we are the rather told of it, that men may not think it a surprize in the life to come; or that if they had known the danger, they would have escaped it; and therefore our Blessed Saviour, who never mention'd punishment but with a design to keep men from it, declares it frequently, that the punishment of those persons and places would be most intolerable, who have received but not improved the light of the Gospel: and that it would be more \* tolerable for the persons who had offered violence to Nature, and had Hell-fire burning in their hearts by their horrid impurities, than for those who heard the Doctrine, and saw the Miracles of Christ and were much the worse, rather than any thing the better for it. But lest we should think that all this black scene of misery was only designed for those who were the actors in that doleful Tragedy of our Saviour's sufferings: we are told by those who were best able to assure us of it, that the same dismal consequences will attend all the affronts of his Doctrine, as if they had been offered to his own Person. For it is nothing but the common flattery and self-deceit of humane nature, which makes any imagine, that though they do not now either believe or obey the Gospel; they should have done both, if they had heard our Saviour speak as never man spake, and seen him do what never man did: For the same disposition of mind which makes them now slight that Doctrine *which is delivered to them by them that heard him*, would have made them slight the Person as well as the Doctrine, if they had heard it from himself. And therefore it is but reasonable that the same punishment should belong to both; especially since God hath provided so abundantly for the assurance of our Faith, by the miraculous and *powerful demonstration of that divine spirit* which did accompany those who were the first publishers of this Doctrine to the World. And therefore the Author of this Epistle, after he hath in the Words of the Text declared, that it is impossible to escape, if we *neglect the great salvation* offered us by the Gospel; in the following words he gives us that account of it, *that at first it began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him: God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.* So that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, falling upon the Apostles, and the many signs and wonders which were wrought by them, were the great testimony of God to the World, that these were the persons employed by himself to declare that doctrine whereon the eternal salvation of Mankind did depend. And since we have so lately acknowledged the truth of this testimony which God gave to the Apostles, by the solemn celebration of that glorious descent of the *Holy Ghost* upon them on the day of Pentecost, that which naturally follows from it is, the great care we ought to take, lest we be found guilty of *neglecting that great salvation* which is offered to us in that Doctrine which was attested in so eminent a manner *by God himself*; and that from the consideration of our own danger; *for how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?* Wherein are three things considerable.

1. The care God hath taken to make us happy, by offering *so great salvation* to us.

2. The care we ought to take in order to our own happiness, *not to neglect* the offers which God hath made us.

3. The unavoidable punishment which those do incur who are guilty of this neglect. *How shall we escape?*

I need not tell this Auditory how forcible the Negative is, which is expressed by such an interrogation which appeals to the judgment of all who hear it, and so relies not upon the bare authority of the speaker, but upon the plain evidence of the thing, which others were judges of as well as himself. As though he had said, if you slight and disesteem the Gospel of Christ, upon whatever grounds ye do it, if either through too great an opinion of the wisdom of this world you despise it as vain and useless, if through too mean an opinion of the excellency of Christianity, you reject it either as uncertain in its Theory, or impossible in its Practice; or if through too great a love of the pleasures of sin, or a secure and careless temper of mind, you regard not the doing what Christianity requires to make you happy; think with your selves, what way you can find to escape the wrath of God; for my part, I know of none; for if God were so severe against the violation of a far meaner institution, *viz.* of the Law of Moses, in so much that every contempt and disobedience did receive a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape who neglect so great salvation? or as the Apostle elsewhere argues to the same purpose. \* He that despised Moses's Law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace? This is a sad subject, but I am afraid too necessary to be spoken to in the Age we live in; wherein men seem to be inapprehensive of the danger of inwardly despising the Religion they profess to own, and the neglecting of that which they hope to be saved by. It is strange that it should be so, but much more strange that men should think to do so, and not be called to an account for it. It is not only the gross and open sinner, that defies Heaven, and by his Oaths and Blasphemies dares God to shew his Power and Justice upon him; but the sly and self-deceiving hypocrite, that hates Religion while he thinks he loves it; that in his heart contemns it, but is afraid to know that he does so, that ought to be possessed with a truer sense of Religion, and a greater dread of the issue of the contempt or neglect of it. There is some appearance of ingenuity in an open enmity; but none so dangerous as that which hides it self under the disguise of friendship. In our Saviour's time there were several sorts of those who shewed their dis-esteem of him, some that were so enraged against him, that they contrive all ways for his disgrace and punishment, others could hear him with patience, † but the cares of this World, the deceitfulness of Riches, and the lust of other things choaked and stifled all good apprehensions of him; that they became weak and ineffectual. And those were guilty of making light of the marriage-feast because of other business which they had to mind, *Matth.* 22. 5. as well as those who offered all the injuries and affronts to his servants that invited them, *v.* 6. And as it was in the days of our Saviour, so it is now; some were eating and drinking, minding nothing but the vain and sensual pleasures of the World; some were buying and selling, so busie in this World, that they had no leisure to think of being happy in another; some were deriding and blaspheming; but all these too wise, or too vain, or too profane to mind the offers of eternal Salvation. I wish we could say it were otherwise now, that a sensual and voluptuous, an easie and careless life in some, that ambition and the restless pursuit after the honour and riches of the world in others, that a profane wir,

\* Heb. 10.  
28, 29.

† Mark 4.  
19.

and a contempt of all that is serious in those that think themselves too great to be Religious, did not enervate the force of Christianity upon their minds, and make them all, though upon different grounds, agree in the neglect of their own salvation. But is the case of such men grown so desperate that no remedy can work upon them? Hath the love of sin and the world so far intoxicated them, that no reason or consideration whatever can awaken them? Have they hardned themselves against all the power of divine Truths with a resolution as strong as death, and as cruel as the grave whither they are going? Will neither the love of happiness nor the fear of misery, their own interest, and the wisdom of avoiding so great a danger, the dread of the Majesty and the Power of God, and the horror of the great day, prevail at least so far on men to consider, whether these things be true or no; and if they be, what unspeakable folly it is to neglect them? And the better to make that appear, I shall prove these following things.

1. That God by the Gospel hath taken so great care of mens happiness, that nothing but a gross neglect can make them miserable.

2. That nothing can be more unreasonable, than when God hath taken so much care of it, men should neglect it themselves.

3. That it is very just for God to vindicate himself against so gross a neglect, by the severe punishment of the life to come.

1. That God by the Gospel hath taken so great care of mens salvation, that nothing but a gross neglect can make them miserable. For, whatever the mind of man can imagine necessary in order to its own happiness, in its present fallen and degenerate condition, is abundantly provided for by the Gospel of Christ. For, man was so wholly lost as to his own felicity, that among the ruins and decays of his Nature, he could not pick up so much as the perfect Image and Idea of his own happiness; when he reflects upon himself he finds himself such a confused mass of folly and weakness, that he can never imagine that so noble a design should have its ground-work laid upon so coarse a Being. And rather than believe the foundation of his happiness to be within himself, there is nothing so vain and trifling without him, but he is ready to fall down before it, and cry out, Here I place my felicity. Sometimes he admires the brave shews, and the Pomp and Gallantry of the World, and thinks nothing comparable to a glorious out-side, and a great train of attendants: sometimes he raises himself, and flutters upon the wings of a popular Air, till a cross blast comes and leaves him in the common rout: sometimes his eyes are dazled with the glory of the more refined and solid pieces of that Earth out of which he was framed, and thinks it reasonable, that the softness of the flesh and blood, should yield to the impressions of silver and gold; sometimes he even envies the pleasures of the Brutes, and if it were possible would out-do them in their grossest sensualities: sometimes again he flatters himself, and then adores his own imperfections, and thinks his Passions, Honour; and his Profaneness, Wit. So far is vain man from making himself happy, that the first step to it, is to make him understand what it is to be so. But supposing that the true image of his happiness should drop down from Heaven; and by the place from whence it fell, should conclude where the thing it self is to be found; yet this were only to make him more miserable, unless he withal knew how to come thither. He is sure not to climb up to it by the tops of the highest mountains, nor to be carried thither upon the wings of a mighty wind; he hath no fiery

fiery Chariots at his command to ascend with to the Glories above: but only he *that maketh his Angels Spirits, and his Ministers a flame of fire,* is able to preserve the souls of men from vanishing into the soft air, and to conduct them to the Mansions of eternal Bliss. It is he only that can make them capable of the Joys of another life, by purging them from the stains and the pollutions of this. And therefore without his grace and favour ever to hope for the happiness of Heaven, must be by fancying a Heaven to be there, where there is no God: So that it is necessary, that the Proposals of this salvation must come from the Author of it, and that with such Arguments as may persuade men of the truth of it, and with such Motives as may encourage men to accept of them. Now the Gospel of Christ affords us all these things which are necessary to our happiness; there we have the most agreeable and settled Notion and Idea of it, the most large and free offers of divine goodness in order to it, the greatest assurance that these things did immediately proceed from God, and the most encouraging motives to accept of these offers in order to that great salvation which is tendered to us.

I. We have the most agreeable and settled notion of true happiness: not such a mean and uncertain thing which lies at the mercy of the continual vicissitudes and contingencies of this present state, but that which is able to bear up the mind of man against all the troubles of this life, and to carry him to a Region beyond them all, where there is a fulness of joy without an alloy of sadness after it, and ever-flowing rivers of pleasures that need no dams to make them rise higher, nor falls to make their motion perceived. Our Blessed Saviour never flatters his followers with the expectation of a felicity in this life; Contentment is the most he hath promised them, and that they may enjoy, if they follow his directions, let this World be what it will, and do what it pleases with them. He never tells his Disciples they may have satisfaction here if they lie upon their Beds of Down with their heads full of tormenting cares, that the pleasure of humane life lies in the gratifications of the senses and in making what use they can of the World; he never deceives them with the promise of so poor a happiness as that which depends upon health, friends, prosperity, and having our own wills. No, but he tells them of a more noble and generous felicity, that will preserve its own state and grandeur in spite of the World; a happiness consistent with loss of Estate, loss of Friends, with affronts and injuries, with persecutions, and death it self. For when our Saviour begins to discourse of happiness, what another kind of strain doth he speak of it in, than any of those *Philosophers* who have so much obstructed the happiness of mans life by their voluminous writings and contentions about it. Here we meet with no *Epicurean* softness, which the sense of true Vertue carried the minds of the more noble Heathens above; no rigid and incredible *Stoical* Paradoxes, that make men only happy by the change of names; no *Aristotelian* supposition of a prosperous life for Vertue to shew its power in; but here the only supposition made, is that which lies in a mans own breast, *viz.* true goodness; and then let his condition be what it will, his happiness is consistent with it. For those above all other persons whom our Saviour calls Blessed, in the beginning of that excellent Abstract of Christianity, his Sermon on the Mount, are, not the rich and great men of the World, but those who to the *poverty* of their condition

\* Matt 5. 3. tion add that \* *of their spirits* too, by being contented with the state they are in; not those, who are full of mirth and jollity, that laugh away one half of their time, and sleep the rest; but they who are

† V. 4. † *in a mournful condition*, either by reason of their own sorrows, or out of compassion to others, or out of a general sense of their own imperfections, or the inconstancy of our present state: Not those, who are ready enough to give, but unable to bear affronts, that think the lives of men a sacrifice small enough for any words of disgrace which they

|| V. 5. have given them; but || *the meek and patient spirit*, that is neither apt to provoke, nor in a rage and madness when it is; that values the rules of Christianity above all the barbarous Punctilioes of Honour. Not those, who are as impetuous in the pursuit of their designs, and as eager of tasting the fruits of them, as the thirsty Traveller in the sands of *Arabia* is of drinking the waters of a pleasant Spring: but such who

\* V. 6. make \* *righteousness* and *goodness* their *meat* and *drink*, that which *they hunger and thirst after*, and take as much pleasure in, as the most voluptuous *Epicure* in his greatest dainties: Not those, whose malice goes beyond their power, and want only enough of that to make the whole World a Slaughter-house, and account racks and torments among the necessary instruments of governing the World; † but such, who when

† V. 7. their enemies are in their power, will not torment themselves by cruelty to them, but have such a sense of common humanity, as not only to commend pity and good nature to those above them, but to use it to those who are under them. Not those whose hearts are as full of dissimulation and hypocrisie, as the others hands are of blood and violence, that care not what they are, so they may but seem to be good:

|| V. 8. but such whose inward integrity and || *purity of heart*, far exceeds the outward shew and profession of it: who honour Goodness for it self, and not for the Glory which is about the head of it. Not those, who never think the breaches of the world wide enough till there be a door large enough for their own interests to go in at by them; that would rather see the world burning, than one peg be taken out of their Chariot-wheels: But such who would sacrifice themselves, like the brave

\* V. 9. \* *Roman*, to fill up the wide gulf which mens contentions have made in the World; and think no Legacy ought to be preserved more inviolable than that of *Peace*, which our Saviour left to his Disciples. Lastly, not those, who will do any thing rather than suffer, or if they *suffer*

† V. 10. it shall be for any thing rather than † *Righteousness*, to uphold a party, or maintain a discontented faction; but such, who never complain of the hardness of their way, as long as they are sure it is that of Righteousness; but if they meet with reproaches and persecutions in it, they welcome them, as the harbingers of their future reward, the expectation of which makes the worst condition not only tolerable but easie to them: Thus we see what kind of happiness it is which the Gospel promises; not such a one as rises out of the dust, or is tost up and down with the motion of it; but such whose never-failing fountain is above, and whither those small rivulets return, which fall down upon Earth to refresh the minds of men in their passage thither; but while they continue here, as the *Jews* say of the Water that came out of the *Rock*, it follows them while they travel through this Wilderness below. So that the foundation of a Christians happiness is the expectation of a life to come, which expectation having so firm a bottom, as the assurance which Christ hath given us by his death and sufferings, it hath power

and

and influence sufficient to bear up the minds of men against all the vicissitudes of this present state.

2. We have the most large and free offers of Divine Goodness in order to it. Were it as easie for Man to govern his own passions, as to know that he ought to do it; were the impressions of Reason and Religion as powerful with Mankind as those of Folly and Wickedness are, we should never need complain much of the misery of our present state, or have any cause to fear a worse to come. There would then be no condition here but what might be born with satisfaction to ones own mind; and the life one day led according to the principles of vertue and goodness would be preferred before a sinning Immortality. But we have lost the command of our selves, and therefore our passions govern us; and as long as such furies drive us, no wonder if our ease be little. When men began first to leave the uncertain speculations of Nature, and found themselves so out of order, that they thought the great care ought to be to regulate their own actions; how soon did their passions discover themselves about the way to govern them! And they all agreed in this, that there was great need to do it, and that it was impossible to do it without the Principles of Vertue; \* for never was there any Philosopher so bad, as to think any man could be happy without Vertue; even the *Epicureans* themselves acknowledged it for one of their established Maxims, *that no man could live a pleasant life without being good*; and supposing the multiplication of *Seets* of *Philosophers* about these things as far as *Varro* thought it possible to 288, (although there never were so many, nor really could be upon his own grounds) yet not one of all these but made it necessary to be vertuous, in order to being happy; and those who did not think vertue to be desired for it self, yet made it a necessary means for the true pleasure and happiness of our lives: But when they were agreed in this, that it was impossible for a vitious man to enjoy any true contentment of mind, they fell into nice and subtle disputes about the names and order of things to be chosen; and so lost the great effect of all their common principles. They pretended great cures for the disorders of mens lives, and excellent remedies against the common distempers of humane nature, but still the disease grew under the remedy, and their applications were too weak to allay the fury of their passions. It was neither the order and good of the Universe, nor the necessity of events, nor the things being out of our power, nor the common condition of humanity, no nor that comfort of ill-natured men, as *Carneades* call'd it, the many companions we have in misery, that could keep their passions from breaking out when a great occasion was presented them. For he who had read all their Discourses carefully, and was a great man himself, I mean *Cicero*, upon the death of his beloved Daughter, was so far from being comforted by them, that he was fain to write a consolation for himself, in which the greatest cure (it may be) was the diversion he found in writing it. But supposing these things had gone much farther, and that all wise men could have governed their passions as to the troubles of this life (and certainly the truest wisdom lies in that) yet what had all this been to a preparation for an eternal state, which they knew little of, and minded less? All their discourse about a happy life here, were vain, and contradicted by themselves; when after all their rants about their *wife man being happy in the Bull of Phalaris*, &c. they yet allow'd him to dispatch himself if he saw cause, which a wise man would

\* *V. Lud.*  
*Viv. ad*  
*S. Aug. de*  
*Civit. Dei.*  
l. 19. c. 1.

never do, if he thought himself happy when he did it. So that unless God himself had given assurance of a life to come, by the greatest demonstrations of it in the death and resurrection of his Son; all the considerations whatever could never have made Mankind happy. But by the Gospel he hath taken away all suspicions and doubts concerning another state, and hath declared his own readiness to be reconciled to us upon our repentance, to pardon what hath been done amiss, and to give that divine assistance whereby our wills may be governed, and our passions subdued, and upon a submission of our selves to his wise Providence, and a sincere obedience to his Laws, he hath promised eternal salvation in the life come.

3. God hath given us the greatest assurance that these offers came from himself; which the *Apostle* gives an account of here, saying, that *this salvation began at first to be spoken by our Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness by signs and wonders, &c.* Wherein we have all the satisfaction which the minds of reasonable men could desire as to these things: It might be justly expected, that the Messenger of so great news to the World should be no mean and ordinary person; neither was he, for the honour was as great in the Person who brought it, as the importance was in the thing it self: No less than the Eternal Son of God came down from the Bosom of his Father, to rectify the mistakes of Mankind, and not only to shew them the way to be happy, but by the most powerful arguments to persuade them to be so. Nay, we find all the three persons of the Trinity here engaged in the great work of mans salvation; *it was first spoken by our Lord, God also bearing them witness, and that with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.* So that not only the first revelation was from God, but the testimony to confirm that it was so, was from him too; there being never so clear an attestation of any divine truths as was of the Gospel. From whence it follows, that the foundation whereon our Faith stands is nothing short of a *divine testimony*, which God gave to the truth of that revelation of his will; so vain are the cavils of those who say, we have nothing but meer *probabilities* for our Faith, and do interpret that manner of proof which matters of fact are capable of, in a sense derogatory to the firmness of our Christian Faith. As though we made the Spirit of God a *Paraclete* or *Advocate* in the worst sense which might as well plead a bad as a good cause. No, we acknowledge, that *God himself did bear witness* to that Doctrine *deliver'd by our Lord*, and that in a most signal and effectual manner, for the conviction of the World, by those demonstrations of a divine power which accompanied the first Preachers of salvation by the Gospel of Christ. So that here the *Apostle* briefly and clearly resolves our Faith. If you ask, *Why we believe that great salvation which the Gospel offers?* the answer is, *Because it was declared by our Lord*, who neither could nor would deceive us: If it be asked, *How we know that this was delivered by our Lord?* he answers, because this was the constant Doctrine of all his Disciples, *of those who constantly heard him, and conversed with him.* But if you ask again, *how can we know, that their testimony was infallible, since they were but men?* he then resolves all into that, *that God bare witness to them by signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.* And those persons, whom these arguments will not convince, none other will. Who are we, that should not think that sufficient which God himself thought



so! who are we, that dare question the certainty of that which hath had the *Broad Seal* of Heaven to attest it! Can any thing make it surer than God himself hath done? And can there be any other way more effectual for that end, than those demonstrations of a divine power and presence which the Apostles were acted by? Those that cavil at this way of proof, would have done so at any other, if God had made choice of it: and those who will cavil at any thing, are resolved to be convinced by nothing; and such are not fit to be discoursed with.

4. Here are the most prevailing motives to persuade them to accept of these offers of salvation. There are two passions, which are the great hinges of Government, *viz.* mens Hopes and Fears, and therefore all Laws have had their sanctions suitable to these two in Rewards and Punishments: now there was never any reward which gave greater encouragement to hope, never any punishment which made fear more reasonable than those are which the Gospel proposes. Will ever that man be good, whom the hopes of Heaven will not make so? Or will ever that man leave his sins whom the fears of Hell will not make to do it? What other arguments can we imagine should ever have that power and influence on mankind, which these may be reasonably supposed to have? Would you have God alter the methods of his Providence, and give his rewards and punishments in this life? But if so, what exercise would there be of the patience, forbearance and goodness of God towards wicked men? Must he do it as soon as ever men sin? then he would never try whether they would repent and grow better: or must he stay till they have come to such a height of sin? then no persons would have cause to fear him, but such who are arrived at that pitch of Wickedness: but how then should he punish them? Must it be by continuing their lives, and making them miserable? but let them live, and they will sin yet further: must it be by utterly destroying them? that to persons, who might have time to sin the mean while, (supposing annihilation were all to be feared) would never have power enough to deter men from the height of their wickedness. So that nothing but the misery of a life to come, can be of force enough to make men fear God, and regard themselves; and this is that which the Gospel threatens to those that neglect their salvation, which it sometimes calls *\* everlasting fire*, sometimes † *the Worm that never dies*,<sup>\* Mar. 25. 41.</sup> sometimes † *the wrath to come*, sometimes *\* everlasting destruction*, all enough to fill the minds of men with horror at the apprehension; and what then will the undergoing it do? Thence our Saviour reasonably † *Thes.* bids men, † *not fear them that can only kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.*<sup>† 2 Thes. 1. 9.</sup> Thus the Gospel suggests the most proper object of fear, to keep men from sin, and as it doth that, so it presents likewise the most desirable object of hope to encourage men to be good; which is no less than a happiness that is easier to hope to enjoy than to comprehend; a happiness infinitely above the most ambitious hopes and glories of this World; wherein greatness is added to glory, weight to greatness, and eternity to them all; therefore call'd † *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*<sup>† 2 Cor. 4. 17.</sup> Wherein the Joys shall be full and constant, the perception clear and undisturbed, the fruition with continual delight and continual desire. Where there shall be no fears to disquiet, no enemies to alarm, no dangers to conquer, nothing shall then be, but an uninterrupted Peace, and unexpressible Joy, and Pleasures for evermore. An l

what could be ever imagined more satisfactory to minds tired out with the vanities of this World, than such a repose as that is? What more agreeable to the minds and desires of good men, than to be eased of this clog of flesh, and to spend eternity with the fountain of all goodness, and *the spirits of just men made perfect*? What more ravishing delight to the souls that are purged, and <sup>Rev. 7.14.</sup> *\* made glorious by the blood of the Lamb*, than to be *singing Hallelujahs to him that sits upon the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever*? How poor and low things are those which men hope for in this World, compared with that great salvation, which the Gospel makes so free a tender of? What a mean thing is it to be great in this World, to be honourable and rich, *i. e.* to be made the object of the envy of some, the malice of others, and at least it may be, an instance of this World's vanity; and after all this to be for ever miserable? But O the Wisdom of a well-chosen happiness, that carries a man with contentment and peace through this life, and at last rewards him with a Crown of everlasting felicity. Thus we see the Gospel proposes the most excellent means to make men happy, if they be not guilty of a gross neglect of it; and if they be, that is their own Act, and they must thank none but themselves if they be miserable.

2. But I pray, what reason can be given, since God is so tender of our happiness, that we should neglect it our selves? which is the next thing to be spoken to. There are three sorts of things we think we have reason to neglect: Such as are too mean, and unworthy our care, such as are so uncertain, that they will not recompence it, such as our own *Interest* is not at all concerned in; but I hope there are none who have an immortal soul, and the use of their understanding, can ever reckon their salvation under one of these.

1. Is it too *mean* an employment for you to mind the matters of your eternal welfare? Is Religion a beggarly and contemptible thing, that it doth not become the greatness of your minds to stoop to take any notice of it? Hath God lost his honour so much with you, that his service should be the object of mens scorn and contempt? But what is it which these brave spirits think a fit employment for themselves, while they despise God and his Worship? Is it to be curiously dressed, and make a fine shew, to think the time better spent at the Glass than at their Devotions? These indeed are weighty employments, and fit in the first place to be minded, if we were made only to be gazed upon. Is it merely to see Plays, and read Romances, and to be great admirers of that vain and frothy discourse which all persons account wit but those which have it? This is such an end of man's life which no *Philosopher* ever thought of. Or is it to spend time in excesses and debaucheries, and to be slaves to as many lusts as will command them? This were something indeed, if we had any other name given us but that of *Men*. Or lastly, is it to have their minds taken up with the great affairs of this World, to be wise in considering, careful in managing the publick interest of a Nation? This is an employment, I grant, fit for the greatest minds, but not such which need at all to take them off from minding their eternal salvation. For the greatest wisdom is consistent with that, else Religion would be accounted folly, and I take it for granted, that it was never the truly wise man but the pretender that entertains any mean thoughts of Religion. And such a one uses the publick Interest no better than he doth Religion, only for a shew to  
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the World, that he may carry on his own designs the better. And is this really such a valuable thing for a man to be contented to cheat himself of his eternal happiness, that he may be able to cheat the world, and abuse his trust? I appeal then to the Consciences of all such who have any sense of humanity, and the common interest of Mankind, setting aside the considerations of a life to come, whether to be just and sober, vertuous and good, be not more suitable to the design of humane Nature, than all the vanities and excesses, all the little arts and designs which men are apt to please themselves with? And if so, shall the eternal happiness which follows upon being good, make it less desirable to be so? No surely, but if God had required any thing to make us happy, which had been as contrary to our present Interest as the Precepts of Christianity are agreeable to it; yet the end would have made the severest commands easie, and those things pleasant which tend to make us happy.

2. Are these things so *uncertain*, that they are not fit for a wise man to be solicitous about them? *If they will come with a little care, they will say, they are desirable, but too much will unfit them for greater business?* But do men believe these things to be true or not, when they say thus? If they be true, why need they fear their uncertainty? If they be certain, what pains and care can be too great about them, since a little will never serve to obtain them? Let but the care and diligence be proportionable to the greatness of the end, and the weight of the things, and you need never fear the want of a recompence for all your labour. But suppose you say, *if you were fully convinced of their certainty, you would look more after them.* What hinders you from being so convinced? Is it not a bad disposition of mind which makes you unwilling to enquire into them? Examine things with a mind as free as you would have it, judge seriously according to the reason of things, and you will easily find the interests of a life to come are far more certain, as well as more desirable than those of this present life. And yet the great uncertainty of all the honours and riches of this world, never hinder the covetous or ambitious person from their great earnestness in pursuit of them. And shall not then all the mighty arguments which God himself hath made use of to confirm to us the certainty of a life to come, prevail upon us to look more seriously after it? Shall the unexpressible love of the Father, the unconceivable sufferings of the Son of God, and the miraculous descent and powerful assistance of the Holy Ghost have no more impression on our minds, than to leave us uncertain of a future state? What mighty doubts and suspicions of God, what distrusts of humane nature, what unspeakable ingratitude, and unaccountable folly lies at the bottom of all this uncertainty? *O fools, and slow of heart to believe, not only what the Prophets have spoken, but what our Lord hath declared, God himself hath given testimony to, and the Holy Ghost hath confirmed!*

3. But is not your *Interest* concerned in these things? Is it all one to you whether your souls be immortal or no? whether they live in eternal felicity, or unchangeable misery? Is it no more to you, than to know what kind of Baubles are in request at the *Indies*, or whether the *Customs of China or Japan* are the wiser? *i. e.* than the most trifling things, and the remotest from our knowledge. But this is so absurd and unreasonable to suppose, that men should not think themselves concerned in their own eternal happiness and misery, that I

shall not shew so much distrust of their understandings to speak any longer to it.

3. But if notwithstanding all these things our neglect still continues, then \* *there remains nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment, and the fiery indignation of God.* For there is no possibility of escaping if we continue to neglect so great salvation. All hopes of escaping are taken away, which are only in that, which men neglect; and those who neglect their only way to salvation, must needs be miserable. How can that man ever hope to be saved by him whose *blood he despises and tramples under foot?* What grace and favour can he expect from God who hath *done despite unto the Spirit of Grace?* That hath cast away with reproach and contempt the greatest kindness and offers of Heaven. What can save him that resolves to be damned, and every one does so, who knows he shall be damned, if he lives in his sins, and yet continues to do so? God himself, in whose only pity our hopes are, hath irreversibly decreed that he will have no pity upon those, who despise his goodness, slight his threatenings, abuse his patience, and sin the more because he offers to pardon. It is not any delight that God takes in the miseries of his Creatures, which makes him punish them; but shall not God vindicate his own honour against obstinate and impenitent sinners? He declares before-hand, that he is far from delighting in their ruine, and that is the reason he hath made such large offers, and used so many means to make them happy; but if men resolve to despise his offers, and slight the means of their salvation, shall not God be *just* without being thought to be *cruel*? And we may assure our selves none shall ever suffer beyond the just desert of their sins; for *punishment*, as the Apostle tells us in the Words before the Text, is nothing *but a just recompence of reward.* And if there were such a one proportionable to the *violation of the Law delivered by Angels*; how shall we think to *escape* who neglect a more excellent means of happiness, which was delivered by *our Lord himself*? If God did not hate sin, and there were not a punishment belonging to it, why did the Son of God die for the expiation of it? and if his death were the only means of expiation, how is it possible that those who neglect that, should escape the punishment not only of their other sins, but of that great contempt of the means of our salvation by him? Let us not then think to trifle with God; as though it were impossible a Being so merciful and kind, should ever punish his Creatures with the miseries of another life: For, however we may deceive our selves, † *God will not be mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap; for he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*

I shall only propound some few Considerations, to prevent so great a neglect as that of your salvation is.

1. Consider what it is you neglect, the *offer* of Eternal Happiness, the greatest kindness that ever was expressed to the World; the foundation of your present peace, the end of your beings, the stay of your minds, the great desire of your Souls, the utmost felicity that humane Nature is capable of. Is it nothing to neglect the favour of a Prince, the kindness of Great Men, the offers of a large and plentiful Estate? but these are nothing to the neglect of the favour of God, the love of his Son, and that salvation which he hath purchased for you. Nay, it is not a bare neglect, but it implies in it a mighty contempt not only of the things offered, but of the kindness of him who offers them. If

men had any due regard for God or themselves, if they had any esteem for his love, or their own welfare, they would be much more serious in Religion than they are. When I see a person wholly immersed in affairs of the World, or spending his time in luxury and vanity, can I possibly think that man hath any esteem of God or of his own Soul? When I find one very serious in the pursuit of his Designs in the World, thoughtful and busie, subtle in contriving them, careful in managing them; but very formal, remiss and negligent in all affairs of Religion, neither inquisitive about them, nor serious in minding them; what can we otherwise think, but that such a one doth really think the things of the World better worth looking after, than those which concern his eternal salvation. But consider, before it be too late, and repent of so great folly. Value an immortal Soul as you ought to do, think what Reconciliation with God, and the Pardon of sin is worth, slight not the dear Purchase which was bought at no meaner a rate than the Blood of the Son of God, and then you cannot but mind the great salvation which God hath tendered you.

2. Consider on what terms you neglect it, or what the things are for whose sake you are so great enemies to your own salvation. Have you ever found that contentment in sin or the vanities of the World, that for the sake of them, you are willing to be for ever miserable? What will you think of all your debaucheries, and your neglects of God and your selves, when you come to die? What would you then give (if it were in your power to redeem your lost time) that you had spent your time less to the satisfaction of your sensual desires, and more in seeking to please God? How uncomfortable will the remembrance be of all your excesses, oaths, injustice and profaneness, when death approaches, and judgment follows it? What peace of mind will there then be to those who have served God with faithfulness, and have endeavoured to *work out their salvation*, though it hath been *with fear and trembling*? But *what would it then profit a man to have gained the whole World, and to lose his own Soul*? Nay, what unspeakable losers must they then be, that lose their Souls for that which hath no value at all, if compared with the world.

3. Consider what follows upon this neglect, not only the loss of great salvation, but the incurring as great damnation for it. The Scripture describes the miseries of the life to come, not meerly by negatives, but by the most sensible and painful things. If destruction be dreadful, what is *everlasting destruction*? If the anguish of the soul, and the pains of the body be so troublesome, what will *the destruction be both of Body and Soul in Hell*? If a Serpent gnawing in our bowels be a representation of an insupportable misery here, what will that be of *the Worm that never dies*? If a raging and devouring fire, which can last but till it hath consumed a fading substance, be in its appearance so amazing, and in its pain so violent, what then will the enduring be of that wrath of God, which shall burn like fire, and yet be everlasting? Consider then of these things, while God gives you time to consider of them; and think it an inestimable mercy that you have yet time to repent of your sins, to beg mercy at the hands of God, to redeem your time, to depart from iniquity, to be frequent in Prayer, careful of your Actions, and in all things obedient to the Will of God; and so God will pardon your former neglects, and grant you this great Salvation.

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# SERMON VI.

Preached on

## GOOD-FRIDAY

Before the

# Lord Mayor, &c.

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HEBREWS XII. 3.

*For, consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary, and faint in your minds.*

**I**T hath never yet been so well with the World, and we have no great reason to hope it ever will be so; that the best of things, or of men, should meet with entertainment in it, suitable to their own worth and excellency. If it were once to be hoped, that all Mankind would be wise and sober, that their judgments would be according to the truth of things, and their actions suitable to their judgments; we might then reasonably expect that nothing would be valued so much as true goodness, nothing so much in contempt and disgrace as impiety and profaneness. But if we find it much otherwise in the Age we live in, we have so much the less cause to wonder at it; because it hath been thus, in those times we might have thought would have been far better than our own. I mean those times and ages, wherein there were not only great things first spoken and delivered to Mankind, but examples as great as the things themselves; but these did so little prevail on the stupid and unthankful World, that they among whom the *Son of God* did first manifest himself, seem'd only solicitous to make good one Prophecie concerning him, *viz. That he should be despised and rejected of men.* And they who suffer'd their malice to live as long as he did, were not contented to let it dye with him; but their fury increases as the Gospel does: and where-ever it had spread it self, they pursue it with all the rude clamours, and violent persecutions which themselves or their factors could raise against it. This we have a large testimony of, in those *Jewish* Christians to whom this Epistle was written; who had no sooner embraced the Christian Religion, but they were set upon by a whole army of persecutors, *Heb. 10. 32. But call to remembrance the former days, in which after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions.* As though the great enemy of souls, and therefore of Christians, had watched the first opportunity to make the strongest impression

impression upon them, while they were yet young and unexperienced; and therefore less able to resist so sharp an encounter. He had found how unsuccessful the offer of the good things of this World had been with their Lord and Master; and therefore was resolved to try what a severer course would do with all his followers. But the same spirit by which he despised *all the Glories of the World*, which the Tempter would have made him believe he was the disposer of, enabled them with a mighty courage, and strange transports of joy, not only to bear their own share of reproaches and afflictions, but a part of theirs who suffer'd with them, *v. 33, 34.* But lest through continual duty, occasion'd by the hatred of their persecutors, and the multitude of their afflictions; their courage should abate, and their spirits faint; the Apostle finds it necessary, not only to put them in mind of their former magnanimity; but to make use of all arguments that might be powerfull with them, to keep up the same vigour and constancy of mind in bearing their sufferings, which they had at first. For he well knew, how much it would tend to the dishonour of the Gospel, as well as to their own discomfort; if after such an early proof of a great and undaunted spirit, it should be said of them, as was once of a great *Roman Captain*, *Ultima Primis cedebant*; that they should decline in their reputation as they did in their years; and at last sink under that weight of duty which they had born with so much honour before. Therefore, as a General in the Field, after a sharp and fierce encounter at first, with a mighty resolution by his Souldiers; when he finds by the number and fresh recruits of the enemy, that his smaller forces are like to be born down before them; and through meer weariness of fighting are ready to turn their backs, or yield themselves up to the enemies mercy; he conjures them by the honour they have gain'd, and the courage they had already expressed, by their own interest, and the example of their Leaders, by the hopes of glory, and the fears of punishment, that they would bear the last shock of their enemies force, and rather be the Trophies of their Courage than of their Triumphs: so does our Apostle, when he finds some among them begin to debate, whether they had best to stand it out or no; he conjures them, 1. By the rememberance of their own former courage, whereby they did bear as sharp tryals as these could be, with the greatest cheerfulness and constancy; and what could they gain by yielding at last, but great dishonour to themselves, that they had suffer'd so long to no purpose, unless it were to discover their own weakness and inconstancy. 2. By the hopes of a reward which would surely follow their faithfulness; *v. 35, 36. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise: and the time will not be long ere ye come to enjoy it, v. 37. but if ye draw back, you lose all your former labours, for he who alone is able to recompence you, hath said, that if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him, v. 38. and then from the example of himself, and all the genuine followers of Christ, but we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul, v. 39.* But lest these examples should not be enough to perswade them; he conjures them by the name of all those who were as eminent for the greatness of their minds as the strength of their Faith; who have despised the frowns as well as the smiles of the world; and were not discouraged by the severest tryals from placing their confidence in God, and

their hopes in a life to come; and all this done by persons who had not received the promise: Heb. 11. 39. And could there be a greater disparagement to the clearness of that light we enjoy above them, if we only grew fainter by it? And therefore in the beginning of this Chapter he encourages them by that Army of Martyrs which had gone before them, by that Cloud of witnesses which did both direct and refresh them, that they would lay aside every thing which was apt to oppress or dishearten them, but especially their sinful fears, which they were so easily betray'd by, and so run with patience the race that was set before them, v. 1. But, saith he, if none of these will prevail with you, there is an example yet behind, that ought above all others to heighten your courage, and that is, of the Captain of your salvation, the author and finisher of your faith, under whom you serve, and from whom you expect your reward; and as Caesar once said to his Souldiers, when he saw them ready to retreat out of the field, *Videte quem, & quo loco Imperatorem deserturi estis.* Remember what kind of General you forsake, and in what place you leave him: one whom you have vow'd your lives and your service to, one who hath thought nothing too dear, which was to be done for your good, one that will be ready to reward the least service you can do for him; one that is ready to assist you to the utmost in what you undertake, one that hath already undergone far more for your sakes, than ever you can do for his; therefore, *Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary, and faint in your minds.*

In which words we have represented to us the unparallel'd example of courage and patience under sufferings, in our Lord and Saviour; and the great influence that it ought to have on all those who are call'd by his Name, that they would not dishonour so excellent a pattern of enduring sufferings, by weakness or dejection of mind. Christianity is a Religion which above all others does arm men against all the contingencies and miseries of the life of man: yea, it makes them serviceable to the most advantageous purposes that the greatest blessings can be designed for. It raises the minds of men higher than barely to consider the common condition of humane nature, the unavoidable nature of such things which are out of our own power, and the unreasonableness of tormenting our selves about the things which are so, and that most mens conditions in the World as to their contentment, depends more upon their minds, than their outward circumstances; though these are things very fit for us as men to consider and make use of: yet they do not reach to that height, which the consideration of a life to come, and the tendency of all our sufferings here to the inancement of our future glory may raise us to. Especially considering not only the weight of the arguments in themselves, but the force they receive from the example of him, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, and despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. By which mighty instance we find, that the sufferings of this life are so far from being inconsistent with the joys of another, that he who is \* the Captain of Salvation, was made perfect through sufferings, and therefore none of his followers have cause to be dejected under them. But that we may the better understand the force of this argument, we shall consider,

1. What those things were which he endured.

2. From

\* Heb. 2.  
10.



2. From whom he suffer'd them; *it was the contradiction of sinners against himself.*

3. In what way and manner he underwent them.

4. For what ends he did it. And when we have considered these, we shall see the influence this example of Christ's sufferings ought to have upon our constancy and patience: which will be the most useful improvement of it to us.

1. *What those things were which Christ endured; which are here comprehended under those words, the contradiction of sinners.* It is agreed by the best Expositors, both Greek and Latin, that under this phrase of *the contradiction of sinners*, the whole History of our Saviour's sufferings is comprehended. All the injuries, reproaches, false accusations, all the cruelties, indignities, and violence, which were offer'd him, from the time of his publick appearance to his expiring upon the Cross, being undergone by him by the malice of unreasonable men, may be call'd *the contradiction of sinners*. For the sense of this word extends as well to actions as words: and the sum of all that which our Saviour suffer'd from them, may be reduced under these heads. 1. The ill entertainment of his Doctrine. 2. The disparagement of his Miracles. 3. The violence offer'd to his Person.

1. The ill entertainment of his Doctrine; which must needs seem very strange to those who do not consider what a difficult access the clearest reason hath to the minds of such who are governed by interest and prejudice. Though all the Prophecies concerning the *Messias* were fulfilled in him; though the expectations of the people were great at that time concerning the appearance of him that was to redeem his people; though all the characters of time, place, and person, did fully agree to what was foretold by the Prophets; though his Doctrine were as becoming the Son of God to reveal, as the sons of men to receive; though the unspotted innocency of his life was so great, as made him weary of his own that betray'd him: yet because he came not with the pomp and splendor which they expected, they despise his Person, revile his Doctrine, persecute his Followers, and contrive his ruin. What could have been imagined more probable, than that the *Jewish Nation*, which had waited long in expectation of the *Messias* coming, should have welcom'd his approach with the greatest joy, and receiv'd the Message he brought with a kindness only short of that which he shewed in coming among them? Was it nothing to be eased of that heavy burden of the Ceremonial Law, which neither they nor their Fathers were able to bear? and that God was willing to exchange the chargeable and troublesome service of the Temple, for the more reasonable and spiritual Worship of himself? Was it nothing to have the Promises of a Land which now groaned under the weight of its oppressions, turned into those of an eternal state of bliss and immortality? and to change the Lamps of the Temple, for the glorious appearance of the Son of Righteousness? Was it nothing to have an offer of Peace and Reconciliation with God made them, after they had suffer'd so much under the fury of his displeasure? Was a meer temporal deliverance by some mighty Conquerer from the subjection they were in to the *Roman Power*, so much more valuable a thing, than an eternal redemption from the powers of Hell and the Grave? Are the pomps and vanities of this present life, such great things in God's account, that it was not possible for his Son to appear without them? Nay, how unsuitable had it been for one who came to preach humility, patience, self-denial, and contempt

tempt of the world, to have made ostentation of the State and Grandeur of it? So that either he must have changed his Doctrine, or rendered himself liable to the suspicion of seeking to get this world by the preaching of another. And if his Doctrine had been of another kind, he might have been esteemed a great person among the *Jews*, but not the Son of God, or the promised *Messias*, in whom all Nations of the Earth should be blessed. Which surely they would never have thought themselves to have been, in one, who must have subdued the neighbour Nations to advance the honour of his own. But since the Son of God thought fit to appear in another manner than they expected him, they thought themselves too great to be saved by so mean a Saviour. If he had made all the Kingdoms of the Earth to have bowed under him, and the Nations about them to have been all tributaries to them; if *Jerusalem* had been made the Seat of an Empire as great as the World it self, they would then have gloried in his Name, and entertained whatever he had said, whether true or false, with a wonderful Veneration. But Truth in an humble dress meets with few admirers; they could not imagine so much Power and Majesty could ever shroud it self under so plain a disguise. Thus Christ \* *came to his own, and his own received him not*. Yea, those that should have known him the best of all others; those who frequently conversed with him, and heard him *speak as never man spake*, and saw him do what never man did, were yet so blinded by the meanness of his Parentage and Education, that they baffle their own Reason, and persist in their Infidelity; because they knew the place and manner of his breeding; the names of his Mother and his Brethren and Sisters; † *Are they not all with us? whence then hath this man all these things?* As though, *Is not this the Carpenters Son*, had been sufficient answer to all he could say or do.

\* 1 John  
11.

† Matt.  
13. 55.

2. The disparagement of his Miracles. Since the bare proposal of his Doctrine, though never so reasonable, could not prevail with them to believe him to be the Son of God, he offers them a further proof of it by the mighty works which were wrought by him. And though the more ingenuous among them were ready to acknowledge, || *that no man could do the things which he did, unless God were with him*: yet they who were resolved to hear and see, and not understand; when they found it not for their credit, to deny matters of fact so universally known attested; they seek all the means to blast the reputation of them that may be. Sometimes raising popular insinuations against him, that he was a man of no austere life, a friend to Publicans and Sinners, one that could choose no other day to do his works on, but that very day wherein God himself did rest from his; and therefore no great regard was to be had to what such a one did. When these arts would not take; but the people found the benefit of his Miracles; in healing the sick, curing the Blind and the Lame, feeding the Hungry; then they undervalue all these in comparison with the wonders that were wrought by *Moses* in the Wilderness. If he would have made the Earth to open her mouth, and swallow up the City and the Power of *Rome*; if he would have fed a mighty Army with bread from Heaven instead of feeding some few thousands with very small Provisions; if instead of raising one *Lazarus* from the Grave, he would have raised up their *Sampson's*, and their *David's*, their men of spirit and conduct, whose very presence would have put a new life into the hearts of the people; if instead of casting out *Devils*, he would have cast

|| Joh. 3. 2.

cast out the *Romans*, whom they hated the worse of the two: if he would have set himself to the cure of a distempered State, instead of healing the maladies of some few inconsiderable persons: if instead of being at the expence of a Miracle to pay tribute, he would have hinder'd them from paying any at all; then a *Second Moses* would have been too mean a title for him, he could have been no less than the promised *Messias*, the *Son of God*. But while he employ'd his power another way, the demonstration of it made them hate him the more; since they thought with themselves what strange things they would have done with it for the benefit of their Country; and therefore express the greatest malice against him, because he would not employ it as they would have him. From thence, they condemn his Miracles as only some effects of a Magical skill; and say, he dispossessed the lesser *Devils* by the power of him that was the *Prince* among them. So unworthy a requital did they make for all the mighty works which had been done among them; *Which*, as our Saviour saith, \* *if they had been* \* Mat. 11. *done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and* 21. *ashes.*

3. But although all this argued a strange spirit of *contradiction* in them to all the designs for their own good; yet the malice from whence that rose, would not stop here; for as they had long contrived his ruin, so they watched only an opportunity to effect it. Which his frequent presence at *Jerusalem* seemed to put into their hands, but his reputation with the people made them fearful of embracing it. Therefore they employ their Agents to deal privately with one of his Disciples who might be fittest for their design; and to work upon his covetous humour by the promise of a reward, to bring him to betray his Master with the greatest privacy into their hands. This *Judas* undertakes, knowing the place and season of his Masters retirements, not far from the City, where they might with the greatest secrecy and safety seize upon his person. Which contrivance of theirs our Saviour was not at all ignorant of; but prepares himself and his Disciples for this great encounter. He institutes his solemn Supper, to be perpetually observed in remembrance of his death and sufferings, after which he discourses admirably with his Disciples, to arm them against their future sufferings; and prays that most divine Prayer, *St. John 17*: which he had no sooner finished, but he goes with his Disciples to the usual place of his retirement in a *Garden* at the foot of the *Mount of Olives*. And now begins the blackest Scene of sufferings that ever was acted upon humane Nature. Which was so great, that the Son of God himself expresseth a more than usual apprehension of it; which he discovered by the *Agony* he was in, in which he sweat † *drops of Blood*; by the earnestness of his Prayer; falling upon his knees, and praying thrice, † Luk. 22. 44. saying, || *O my Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me; never-* || Mat. 26. 39. *theless not as I will, but as thou wilt.* Surely, this Cup must needs have a great deal of bitterness in it, which the Son of God was so earnest to be freed from. If there had been nothing in it but what is commonly incident to humane Nature, as to the apprehensions of death or pain, it seems strange; that he who had the greatest innocency, the most perfect charity, the freest resignation of himself, the fullest assurance of the reward to come, should express a greater sense of the horror of his sufferings, than thousands did, who suffer'd for his sake. But now was *the hour* come wherein the Son of God was to be made a  
Sacrifice

Sacrifice for the sins of men wherein he was *to bear our griefs, and carry our sorrows*, when he was *\* to be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities*; now † *his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death*; for now || *the hour of his enemies was come, and the power of darkness*. And accordingly they improve it; they came out against him as a Malefactor, with swords and staves, and having seized his Person, being betrayed into their hands by one of his Disciples, they carry him to the High Priests house, where his professed enemies presently condemn him of *\* Blasphemy*, and not content with this, they express the greatest contempt of him, for they spit in his face, they buffet him, and smite him with the palms of their hands, they mock him, and bid him prophesie who it was that smote him; so insolent was their malice grown, and so spiteful was their indignation against him. And so fearful were they, lest he should escape their hands, that the very next morning early, they send him bound to the *Roman Governour*, to have the sentence pronounced against him, to whom they accuse him of *Sedition and Treason*; but *Pilate* upon examination of him declares, † *he found no fault in him*; which made them heap more unreasonable calumnies upon him, being resolved by what means soever to take away his Life. Nay, the price of the Blood of the Son of God was fallen so low with them, that they preferred the life of a known seditious person, and a Murderer before him. And when *Pilate* being unsatisfied, asked still, || *what evil hath he done?* they continue their importunity without any other answer but *Crucifie him*, and making up what wanted in Justice and Reason in the loudness of their clamours. And at last seeing the fury and madness of the people, with the protestation of his own innocency as to his blood, he delivers him up to the people; and now he is stripped, and scourged, and mocked, with a *Crown of Thorns, a Scarlet Robe, and a Reed in his hand*: all the indignities they could think of, they put upon him. But though it pleased them to have him exposed to all the ignominies imaginable, yet nothing would satisfy them but *his blood*; and therefore he is led forth to be crucified, and though so lately scourged and weakned by his sorrows, yet he is made to carry his own Cross (at least through the City) for no other death could satisfy them, but the most ignominious and painful. And when he was brought to the place of Crucifixion, they nail his hands and feet to the Cross, and while he was hanging there, they deride and mock him still, they divide his Garments before his face, give him Gall and Vinegar to drink, and the last act of violence committed upon him, was the piercing of his side, so that out of his *Pericardium* issued *\* both water and blood*. Thus did the Son of God suffer at the hands of unreasonable men; thus was the blood of that immaculate Lamb split by the hands of violence; and he who left the bosom of his Father to bring us to glory, was here treated as if he had been unworthy to live upon the Earth.

2. But that which yet heightens these sufferings of Christ, is to consider, *from whom* he suffer'd these things, it was *from sinners*; which is as much as to say, from *men*, if the word were taken in the largest sense of it; for all have sinned; but being taken by us in opposition to other men, so it implies a greater height of wickedness in these than in other persons. But this is not here to be consider'd absolutely, as denoting what kind of persons he suffer'd from, but with a particular respect to the nature of their proceedings with him, and the obligations that

that lay upon them to the contrary. So that the first shews the injustice and unreasonableness of them; the second, their great ingratitude, considering the kindness and good will which he expressed towards them.

1. The injustice and unreasonableness of their proceedings against him. It is true indeed, (what *Socrates* said to his wife, when she complained that he suffer'd unjustly, *What, saith he, and would you have me suffer justly?*) it is much greater comfort to the person who does suffer, when he does it unjustly, but it is a far greater reflection on those who were the causes of it. And that our *Blessed Saviour* did suffer with the greatest injustice from these men, is apparent from the falseness and weakness of all the accusations which were brought against him. To accuse the *Son of God* for Blasphemy, in saying, he was so, is as unjust as to condemn a *King* for treason, because he saith he is a *King*: they ought to have examined the grounds on which he called himself so; and if he had not given pregnant evidences of it, then to have passed sentence upon him as an Impostor and Blasphemer. If the thing were true, that he was what we said, *the Son of God*, what horrible guilt was it in them, to imbrue their hands in his blood? and they found he always attested it, and now was willing to lay down his life to confirm the truth of what he said. This surely ought at least to have made them more inquisitive into what he had affirmed, but they allow him not the liberty of a fair tryal, they hasten and precipitate the sentence, that they might do so the execution. If he were condemned as a false Prophet; (for that seems to be the occasion of the *Sanhedrim* meeting to do it, to whom the cognifance of that did particularly belong) why do they not mention what it was he had foretold, which had not come to pass; or what reason do they give why he had usurped such an Office to himself? If no liberty were allowed under pain of death for any to say, that they were sent from God, how was it possible for the *Messias* ever to appear, and not be condemned? for the expectation of him was, that he should be a great person immediately sent from God, for the delivery of his people. And should he be sent from God, and not say that he was so? for how then could men know that he was? So that their way of proceeding with him, discovers it self to be manifestly unjust, and contrary to their own avowed expectations. Neither were they more successful in the accusation of him before *Pilate*; why did not the witnesses appear to make good the charge of sedition and treason against him? where were the proofs of any thing tending that way? Nay, that which abundantly testified the innocency of our *Saviour*, as to all the matters he was accused of, was that the *Roman Governour*, after a full examination of the cause, declares him innocent, and that not only once but several times; and was fully satisfied in the Vindication he made of himself, so that nothing but the fear of what the *Jews* threatned, *viz.* accusing him to *Cesar* (a thing he had cause enough otherwise to be afraid of) which made him at last yield to their importunity. But there was one circumstance more which did highly discover the innocency of Christ, and the injustice of his sufferings, which was *Judas's* confession and end; the man who had betray'd his Lord, and had receiv'd the wages of his iniquity; but was so unquiet with it, that in the time when his other Disciples durst not own him, he with a great *impetus* returns to them with his Money; throws it among them with that sad farewell to them all, \* *I have*

\* *Mat. 27.*  
4.  
*sinned,*

sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. What could have been said more for his Vindication at this time than this was, by such a person as Judas, one who had known our Saviour long, and had been the fittest instrument, if any guilt could have been fasten'd upon him, to have managed the accusation against him? but the anxiety of his mind was too great for what he had done already, to live to do them any longer service; for either his grief suffocated him, or his guilt made him hang himself; for the words will signifie either. Neither can it be said by any modern Jews, that all the testimony we have of these things is from his own Disciples; but that certainly they had some greater matter to accuse him of; which we now have lost. For how is it possible to conceive, that a matter so important as that was, should be lost by those of their own Nation, who were so highly concerned to vindicate themselves in all places, as soon as the Gospel was spread abroad in the World? For the guilt of this blood was every where by the Christians charged upon them; and their prodigious sufferings afterwards were imputed wholly by them to the shedding of that blood of Christ, which by a most solemn imprecation they had said, *should be upon them and their Children*. Besides, how comes Celsus, who personates a Jew, opposing Christianity, to mention no other accusations against him but those recorded in the Gospel; and \* Origen challenges him or any other person to charge him with any action which might deserve punishment. And which is very observable, Porphyrie, one of the most inveterate enemies of Christianity, and that took as much pains to write against it as any, and had more learning to do it with, yet in his Book of the *Philosophy of Oracles*, as † St. Augustin tells us, quotes an Oracle wherein were these words concerning Christ, *And what became of him after his death? it saith, that his Soul was immortal, || Viri pietate præstantissimi est illa anima, and that it was the soul of a most excellent person for piety; and being then asked, why he was condemned? the answer only is, that the Body (of the best) is exposed to weakning torments, but the Soul rests in heavenly habitations*. So that on no account can this contradiction appear to be otherwise than an act of great injustice and cruelty, and therefore must needs be the contradiction of sinners.

\* Orig. c.  
Cels. l. 3.  
p. 123.

† Agust.  
de Civit.  
Dei, l. 19.  
c. 23.  
|| Cur er-  
go damnatus est?  
respondit  
Dea: corpus quidem debilitantibus tormentis  
semper oppositum est  
anima autem  
piorem  
caelesti sedi  
insidet.  
\* John 10.  
32.

2. This contradiction of theirs to Christ was an act of high Ingratitude. It was a sharp but very just rebuke which the Jews received from our Saviour, when they were once ready to stone him; \* Many good works have I shewed you from my Father, for which of those works do you stone me? The very same might have been applyed to his Judges and Accusers; when they were about to crucifie him. For what was his whole Life after he appeared publicly, but a constant design of doing good? His presence had far more vertue for the curing all bodily distempers, than the Pool of Bethesda among the Jews, or the Temples of Esculapius among the Gentiles. What wonders were made of very small things done by other persons, as the cure of a blind Man by *Vespasian*! when such multitudes of far more certain and considerable cures, can hardly keep up the reputation of any thing extraordinary in him. But though his kindness was great to the bodies of men, where they were fit objects of pity and compassion; yet it was far greater to their souls, that being more agreeable to the design of his coming in the World; for the other tended to raise such an esteem of him as might make him the more successful in the cure of their Souls. And to shew, that this was his

his great business, where-ever he comes, he discourses about these things, takes every opportunity that might be improved for that end, refuses no company he might do good upon, and converses not with them with the pride and arrogance of either the *Pharisees* or *Philosophers*; but with the greatest meekness, humility and patience. How admirable are his more solemn Discourses, especially that upon the Mount, and that wherein he takes leave of his Disciples! How dry and insipid are the most sublime Discourses of the *Philosophers* compared with these! how clearly doth he state our Duties, and what mighty encouragements does he give to practise them! how forcibly does he perswade men to self-denial and contempt of the world! how excellent and holy are all his Precepts! how serviceable to the best interest of men in this life and that to come! how suitable and desirable to the souls of good men are the rewards he promises! what exact rule of Righteousness hath he prescribed to men, *in doing as they would be done by!* with what vehemency doth he rebuke all hypocrisy and *Pharisaism!* with what tenderness and kindness does he treat those who have any real inclinations to true goodness! with what earnestness does he invite, and with what love doth he embrace all repenting sinners! with what care doth he instruct, with what mildness doth he reprove, with what patience doth he bear with his own Disciples! Lastly, with what authority did he both speak and live, such as commanded a reverence, where it did not beget a love! And yet after a life thus spent, all the requital he met with, was to be reproached, despised, and at last crucified. O the dreadful effects of malice and hypocrisy! for these were the two great enemies which he always proclaimed open war with; and these at first contrived, and at last effected his cruel death. What baseness, ingratitude, cruelty, and injustice, (and what not?) will those two sins betray men to, when they have once taken possession of the hearts of men! for we can find nothing else at the bottom of all that wretched conspiracy against our Saviour; but that his doctrine and design was too pure and holy for them; and therefore they study to take him away who was the author of them.

3. We consider, *in what way and manner*, our Saviour underwent all these sufferings; and this as much as any thing is here propounded to our *consideration*. For it is not only who, or what, but in what manner he endured the contradiction of sinners, that we ought to consider, to prevent fainting and dejection of mind. So another Apostle tells us, \* *That Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he suffered he threatned not, but committed himself to him that judged righteously.* He uses none of those ranting expressions which none of the patientest persons in the world were accustomed to; of bidding them *laugh in Phalaris his Bull*; and when they were racked with pains, to cry out *Nil agis dolor*: he tells them not, that it is their duty to have no sense of torments, and to be jocund and pleasant when their flesh is torn from them, or nailed to a Cross; if this be any kind of fortitude, it is rather that of a *Gladiator* than of a wise man or a Christian. The worst of men either through a natural temper of body, of having hardned themselves by custom; have born the greatest torments with the least expression of grief under them. And *Panetius*, one of the wisest of the *Stoicks*, is so far from making insensibleness of pain the property of a wise man, that he makes it not the property of a man. The inferiour Creatures are call'd *Brutes* from their

dulness and insensibleness, and not meerly from want of reason, any further than that one follows from the other: \* *Bruta existimantur animalium quibus cor durum riget*, saith *Pliny*, those animals are call'd *Brutes*, which have the hardest hearts: and the nearer any of them approach to the nature of man, the more apprehensive they are of danger, and the more sensible of pain; thence † *Scaliger* saith of the *Elephant*, that it is *maxima bellua, sed non maxime bruta*, though it be the greatest beast, it is the least a *Brute*. Stupidity then under sufferings can be no part of the excellency of a man: which in its greatest height is in the *Beings* the most beneath him. But when danger is understood, and pain felt, and Nature groans under it, then with patience and submission to undergo it, and to conquer all the strugglings of Nature against it; that is the duty and excellency of a Christian! If to express the least sense of grief and pain, be the highest excellency of suffering, the *Macedonian Boy* that suffered his flesh to be burnt by a Coal, till it grew offensive to all about him, without altering the posture of his arm, lest he should disturb *Alexanders* sacrifice, out-did the greatest *Philosophers* of them all. *Passidonius* his pitiful rant over a fit of the Gout, so highly commended by *Pompey* and || *Tully*; *O pain, it is to no purpose: tho' thou beest troublesome, I will never confess thou art evil*; falls extremely short of the resolution of the *Macedonian Boy*, or any of the *Spartan Youths*, who would not in the midst of torments so much as confess them troublesome. And what a mighty revenge was that, that he would not confess it to be evil, when his complaint that it was troublesome, was a plain argument that he thought it so. It is not then the example of *Zeno* or *Cleanthes*, or the rules of *Stoicism*, which *Dionysius Heracleotes*, in a fit of the *Stone* complained of the folly of, that are to be the measures of patience, and courage in bearing sufferings; but the example and Precepts of our Lord and Saviour, who expressed a great sense of his sufferings, but withal the greatest submission under them. When \* *Lipsius* lay a dying, and one of the by-standers knowing how conversant he had been in the *Stoicks* writings, began to suggest some of their Precepts to him, *Vana sunt ista*, said he, I find all those but vain things; and beholding the Picture of our Saviour near his bed, he pointed to that, and cryed, *hec vera est patientia*: there is the true pattern of Patience. For notwithstanding that *Agony* he was in immediately before his being betray'd, when he sees the Officers coming towards him, he asks them *whom they seek for?* and tells them, *I am he*; which words so astonished them, † *that they went back and fell upon the ground*: thereby letting them understand how easie a matter it was for him to have escaped their hands; and that it was his own free consent, that he went to suffer, for he knew certainly before-hand, the utmost that he was to undergo, and therefore it was no unreasonable *impetus*, but a settled resolution of his mind to endure all the *contradictions of sinners*. When he was spit upon, mocked, reproached and scourged, none of all these could draw one impatient expression from him. The malice and rage of his enemies did not at all provoke him; unless it were to pity and pray for them. And that he did, with great earnestness in the midst of all his pains: and though he would not plead for himself to them, yet he pleads for them to God, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*. How much more divine was this, than the admired *Theramenes* among the *Greeks*, who being condemned to die by the thirty *Tyrants*, when he was drinking off his cup of Poyson, said, *he drank that to Cri-*

\* *Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 11. 37.*

† *Scalig. hist. anim. l. 2. sect. 133.*

|| *Tull. Tusculan. l. 2.*

\* *Aub. Miræus in vita Lipsii. p. 60.*

† *John 18. 6.*



*tias*, one of his most bitter enemies, and hoped he would pledge it shortly. *Socrates* seemed not to express seriousness enough at least, when he bid one of his friends when he was dying offer up a Cock to *Æsculapius* for his deliverance. *Aristides* and *Phocion* among the *Greeks* came the nearest to our Saviour's temper, when one pray'd, *That his Country might have no cause to remember him when he was gone*, and the other charged his Son, *to forget the injuries they had done him*; but yet by how much the greater the Person and Office was of our *Blessed Saviour*, than of either of them, by how much the cruelty and ignominy, as well as pain was greater which they expos'd him to, by how much greater concernment there is to have such an offence pardon'd by one that can punish it with eternal misery, than not revenged by those, who tho' they may have will, have not always power to execute; so much greater was the kindness of our *Saviour* to his enemies, in his Prayer upon the Cross, than of either of the other, in their concernment for that ungrateful City, that had so ill requited their services to it. Thus when the Son of God was oppressed, and afflicted, \* *He opened not his mouth,* \* Isa. 23. 7. but only in Prayer for them, who were his bitter enemies; and though nothing had been more easie than for him to have cleared himself from all their accusations, who had so often baffled them before; yet he would not now give them that suspicion of his innocency, as to make any *Apology* for himself; but *committed himself to God that judges righteously, and was brought as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers was dumb, so he opened not his mouth.* And the reason thereof was, he knew what further design for the good of mankind was carrying on by the bitterness of his passion, and that all the cruel usage he underwent, was that he might be *a sacrifice of atonement* for the sins of the World. Which leads to the last thing propounded to our consideration.

4. Which is, *the causes why God was pleased to suffer his Son to endure such contradiction of sinners against himself.* I know it is an easie answer to say, that God had determin'd it should be so, and that we ought to enquire no further: but sure such an answer can satisfy none who consider, how much our salvation depends upon the knowledge of it, and how clear and express the Scripture is in assigning the causes of the Sufferings of Christ. Which though as far as the instruments were concerned in it, we have given an account of already; yet considering the particular management of this grand affair by the care of divine Providence, a higher account must be given of it, why so divine and excellent a Person should be expos'd to all the contempt and reproach imaginable, and after being made a Sacrifice to the tongues and rods of the people, then to dye a painful and ignominious death? So that allowing but that common care of divine Providence, which all sober *Heathens* acknowledged, so transcendent Sufferings as these were, of so holy and innocent a person, ought to be accounted for, in a more than ordinary manner; when they thought themselves concerned to vindicate the Justice of God's Providence in the common calamities of those who are reputed to be better than the generality of Mankind. But the reasons assigned in that common case will not hold here, since this was a person immediately sent from God upon a particular message to the World, and therefore might plead an exemption by vertue of his Ambassage from the common arrests and troubles of humane nature. But it was so far otherwise, as though God had designed him on purpose to let us see how much misery humane nature can undergo. Some think

themselves to go as far as their reason will permit them; when they tell us, that he suffer'd all these things to confirm the truth of what he had said, and particularly the Promise of Remission of sins, and that he might be an example to others, who should go to Heaven by suffering afterwards, and that he might, being touched with the feeling of our infirmities, here, have the greater pity upon us now he is in Heaven. All these I grant to have been true and weighty reasons of the Sufferings of Christ, in subordination to greater ends; but if there had been nothing beyond all this, I can neither understand why he should suffer so deeply, as he did, nor why the Scripture should insist upon a far greater reason more than upon any of these? I grant the death of Christ did confirm the truth of his Doctrine, as far as it is unreasonable to believe that any one who knew his Doctrine to be false, would make himself miserable to make others believe it; but if this had been all intended, why would not an easier and less ignominious death have serv'd? since he who would be willing to dye to confirm a falshood, would not be thought to confirm a truth by his death, because it was painful and shameful. Why, if all his Sufferings were designed as a testimony to others, of the truth of what he spake, were the greatest of his Sufferings, such as none could know the anguish of them but himself, I mean his *Agony* in the Garden, and that which made him cry out upon the Cross; *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Why were not his Miracles enough to confirm the truth of his Doctrine? since the *Law of Moses* was received without his death, by the evidence his Miracles gave that he was sent from God; since the Doctrine of remission of sins had been already deliver'd by the Prophets, and received by the People of the *Jews*; since those who would not believe for his Miracles sake, neither would they believe tho' they should have seen him rise from the Grave, and therefore not surely because they saw him put into it. But of all things, the manner of our *Saviour's* sufferings seems least designed to bring the World to the belief of his Doctrine, which was the main obstacle to the entertainment of it among the men of greatest reputation for wisdom and knowledge. For it was \* *Christ crucified, which was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.* Had the Apostles only preached that the *Son of God* had appeared from Heaven and discovered the only way to bring men thither, that he assumed our Nature for a time to render himself capable of conversing with us, and therein had wrought many strange and stupendous Miracles; but after he had sufficiently acquainted the World with the nature of his Doctrine; he was again assumed up into Heaven; in all probability, the Doctrine might have been so easily received by the World, as might have saved the lives of many thousand persons, who dyed as *Martyrs* for it. And if it had been necessary that some must have dyed to confirm it, why must the *Son of God* himself do it? when he had so many Disciples who willingly sacrificed their lives for him, and whose death would on that account have been as great a confirmation of the truth of it as his own. But if it be alledged further, † that *God now entering into a Covenant with man for the pardon of sin, the shedding of the blood of Christ was necessary as a federal rite to confirm it.* I answer, if only as a federal rite, why no cheaper Blood would serve to confirm it but that of the *Son of God*? We never read that any *Covenant* was confirmed by the death of one of the contracting parties; and we cannot think that *God* was so prodigal of the blood of his *Son*, to have it shed only in allusion to some ancient customs.

\* 1 Cor.  
1. 23.

† Quod  
caetera eti-  
am federa  
caeso ani-  
mali ali-  
quo sanc-  
ri, & san-  
guine ejus  
confirmari  
solevent.  
Crell. c.  
Grot. ad  
Cap. 1.  
p. 29.

But

But if there were such a necessity of alluding to them, why might not the blood of any other person have done it? When yet all that custom was no more, but that a sacrifice should be offer'd, and upon the parts of the sacrifice divided, they did solemnly swear and ratifie their Covenant. \* And if this be yielded them, it then follows from this custom, that Christ must be consider'd as a *sacrifice* in his death; and so the ratification of the Covenant must be consequent to that oblation which he made of himself upon the Cross. Besides, how incongruous must this needs be, that the death of Christ the most innocent person in the world, without any respect to the guilt of sin, should suffer so much on purpose to assure us, that God will pardon those who are guilty of it? May we not much rather infer the contrary, considering the holiness and justice of God's nature; if he dealt so severely *with the green tree, how much more will he with the dry?* If one so innocent suffer'd so much, what then may the guilty expect? If a Prince should suffer the best subject he hath to be severely punished, could ever any imagine that it was with a design to assure them that he would pardon the most rebellious? No; but would it not rather make men affraid of being too innocent, for fear of suffering too much for it? And those who seem very careful to preserve the honour of God's Justice, in not punishing one for another's faults, ought likewise to maintain it in the punishing of one who had no fault at all to answer for. And to think to escape this by saying, *That to such a person such things are calamities, but no punishments,* is to revive the ancient exploded Stoicism, which thought to reform the diseases of Mankind by meer changing the names of things, though never so contrary to the common sense of humane nature: which judges of the nature of punishments by the evils men undergo, and the ends they are designed for. And by the very same reason that God might exercise his dominion on so innocent a person as our Saviour was, without any respect to sin *as the moving cause to it,* he might lay eternal torments on a most innocent Creature (for degrees and continuance do not alter the reason of things) and then escape with the same evasion, that this was no act of injustice in God because it was a meer exercise of Dominion. And when once a sinner comes to be perswaded by this that God will pardon him, it must be by the hopes that God will show kindness to the guilty, because he shews so little to the innocent, and if this be agreeable to the Justice and Holiness of God's nature, it is hard to say what is repugnant to it. If to this it be said, *That Christ's consent made it no unjust exercise of Dominion in God towards him:* it is easily answered, that the same consent will make it less injustice in God to lay the punishment of our sins upon Christ, upon his undertaking to satisfy for us; for then the consent supposes a meritorious cause of punishment; but in this case the consent implyeth none at all. And we are now enquiring into the reasons of such sufferings, and consequently of such a consent; which cannot be imagined but upon very weighty motives, such as might make it just in him to consent as well as in God to inflict.

Neither can it be thought that all the design of the sufferings of Christ, was *to give us an example* and an encouragement to suffer our selves; tho' it does so in a very great measure, as appears by the Text it self. For the hopes of an eternal reward for those short and light afflictions, ought to be encouragement enough, to go through the miseries of this life in expectation of a better to come. And the *Cloud of Witnesses* both under the Law and the Gospel, of those who have suffer'd for righteousness sake,

\* V. Heinf.  
not. ad Sil.  
p. 9, 10.

fake, ought to make no one think it strange, if he must endure that, which so many have done before him, and been crowned for it. And lastly, to question whether *Christ could have pity enough upon us in our sufferings*, unless he had suffer'd so deeply himself; will lead men to distrust the pity and compassion of Almighty God, because he was never capable of suffering, as we do. But the *Scripture* is very plain and full (to all those who rack not their minds to pervert it) in assigning a higher reason than all these of the *sufferings of Christ*, viz. That \* *Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust*; that † *his soul was made an offering for sin*, and that *the Lord* therefore as on a sacrifice of atonement, || *laid on him the iniquities of us all*: That, *through the eternal Spirit*, \* *He offer'd himself without spot to God*, and did appear to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; that he was made a propitiation for our sins; that, † *He laid down his life as a price of Redemption for Mankind*; that, || *through his blood we obtain Redemption even the forgiveness of sins*, which in a more particular manner is attributed \* *to the blood of Christ*, as the procuring cause of it. That he dyed † *to reconcile God and us together*; and that || *the Ministry of Reconciliation*, is founded \* *on God's making him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*: and that we may not think that all this Reconciliation respects us and not God; he is said † *To offer up himself to God*; and for this cause *to be a Mediator of the New Testament*, and || *to be a faithful High-Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people*; \* *and every High-Priest, taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God*; not appointed by God in things meerly tending to the good of men; which is rather the office of a *Prophet* than a *Priest*. So that from all these places it may easily appear, that the blood of Christ is to be looked on as a sacrifice of Atonement for the sins of the World. Not as though Christ did suffer the very same which we should have suffer'd, for that was eternal death as the consequent of guilt in the person of the Offender, and then the discharge must have been immediately consequent upon the payment, and no room had been left for the freeness of remission, or for the conditions required on our parts; But that God was pleas'd to accept of the death of his Son, *as a full, perfect, sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the World*: as our Church expresseth it; and in consideration of the sufferings of his Son, is pleas'd to offer pardon of sin upon sincere repentance, and eternal life upon a holy obedience to his will. Thus much for the things we are to consider concerning *the contradiction of sinners which Christ endured against himself*.

Nothing now remains, but the influence that it ought to have upon us, lest we be weary and faint in our minds. For which end I shall suggest two things.

1. The vast disproportion between Christ's sufferings and ours.

2. The great encouragement we have from his sufferings, to bear our own the better.

1. The vast Disproportion between Christ's sufferings and our own. Our lot is fallen into suffering times; and we are apt enough to complain of it. I will not say it is not wholly true of us, what the *Moralist* saith generally of the complaints of men, *Non quia dura sed quia molles patimur*; that it is not the hardness of our conditions so much as the softness of our spirits which makes us complain of them. For I must needs say, this *City* hath smarted by such a series and succession of judgments

judgments which few Cities in the World could parallel in so short a time. The Plague hath emptied its houses, and the fire consumed them; the War exhausted our spirits, and it were well if Peace recovered them. But still these are but the common calamities of humane nature, things that we ought to make account of in the World, and to grow the better by them. And it were happy for this City, if our thankfulness and obedience were but answerable to the mercies we yet enjoy: let us not make our condition worse by our fears; nor our fears greater than they need to be: for no enemy can be so bad as they. Thanks be to God our condition is much better at present than it hath been; let us not make it worse by fearing it may be so. Complaints will never end till the world does; and we may imagine that will not last much longer; when the City thinks it hath Trade enough, and the Country Riches enough. But I will not go about to persuade you that your condition is better than it is, for I know it is to no purpose to do so; all men will believe as they feel. But suppose our condition were much worse than it is; yet what were all our sufferings compared with those of our Saviour for us? the sins that make us smart, wounded him much deeper; they pierced his side, which only touch our skin, we have no cause to complain of the bitterness of that Cup which he hath drunk of the dregs of already. We lament over the ruins of a City, and are revived with any hopes of seeing it rise out of the dust; but Christ saw the ruins that sin caused in all mankind, he undertook the repairing them, and putting men into a better condition than before: And we may easily think what a difficult task he had of it; when he came to restore them who were delighted in their ruins, and thought themselves too good to be mended. It is the comfort of our miseries, (if they be only in this life) that we know they cannot last long; but that is the great aggravation of our Saviour's sufferings, that the contradiction of sinners continues against him still. Witness, the *Atheism*, I cannot so properly call it, as the *Antichristianism* of this present Age; wherein so many profane persons act over again the part of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*; they slight his Doctrine, despise his Person, disparage his Miracles, contemn his Precepts, and undervalue his Sufferings. Men live as if it were in defiance to his holy Laws; as though they feared not what God can do, so much as to need a *Mediator* between him and them. If ever men tread under foot the Son of God, it is when they think themselves to be above the need of him; if ever they count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, it is not only when they do not value it as they ought, but when they exercise their profane wits upon it. *Blessed Saviour!* was it not enough for thee to bear the contradiction of sinners upon Earth; but thou must still suffer so much at the hands of those whom thou diedst for, that thou mightest bring them to Heaven? was it not enough for thee to be betrayed on Earth, but thou must be defied in Heaven? was it not enough for thee to stoop so low for our sakes, but that thou shouldst be trampled on because thou didst it? was the ignominious death upon the Cross too small a thing for thee to suffer in thy Person, unless thy Religion be contemned, and exposed to as much shame and mockery as thy self was? Unhappy we, that live to hear of such things! but much more unhappy if any of our sins have been the occasion of them: If our unsuitable lives to the Gospel have open'd the mouths of any against so excellent a Religion. If any malice and revenge, any humour and peevishness, any pride or hypocrisy, any sensuality

fuality and voluptuousness, any injustice, or too much love of gain, have made others despise that Religion which so many pretend to, and so few practise. If we have been in any measure guilty of this, as we love our Religion, and the honour of our Saviour, let us endeavour by the holiness and meekness of our Spirits, the temperance and justice of our actions, the patience and contentedness of our minds, to recover the honour of that Religion which only can make us happy, and our Posterity after us.

2. What Encouragement we have from the sufferings of Christ, to bear our own the better; because we see by his example that God deals no more hardly with us, than he did with his own Son, if he lays heavy things upon us. Why should we think to escape, when his own Son underwent so much? if we meet with reproaches, and ill usage, with hard measure, and a mean condition, with injuries and violence, with mockings and affronts, nay, with a shameful and a painful death, what cause have we to complain, for did not the Son of God undergo all these things before us? If any of your Habitations have been consumed, that you have been put to your shifts where to lodge your selves, or your Families; consider, that *\* though the Foxes have holes, and the Birds of the Air had nests, yet the Son of Man had not whereon to lay his head.* If your condition be mean and low, think of him, *† who being in the form of God, took upon him the form of a servant;* and *‖ though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that through his poverty ye might be made rich.* If you are unjustly defamed and reproached, consider what contumelies and disgraces the Son of God underwent for you. If you are in pain and trouble, think of his agony and bloody sweat, the nailing of his hands and feet to the Cross, to be a sacrifice for the expiation of your sins. Never think much of undergoing any thing, whereby *\* you may be conformable to the Image of the Son of God,* knowing this, *† that if ye suffer with him, ye shall also be glorified together.* And you have never yet set a true estimate and value upon things, if you *‖ reckon the sufferings of this present life worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.* Which *Glory* ought always to bear up our minds under our greatest afflictions here; and the thoughts of that, will easily bring us to the thoughts of his sufferings, who *\* by his own blood purchased an eternal redemption for us.* Therefore, *consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary, and faint in your minds.*

\* Mat. 8.  
20.

† Phil. 2.  
6, 7.  
‖ 2 Cor.  
8. 9.

\* Rom.  
8. 29.  
† V. 17.

‖ V. 18.

\* Heb. 9.  
12.

S E R M O N

# SERMON VII.

Preached before the

# K I N G,

January 30. 166<sup>8</sup>/<sub>9</sub>.

JUDE, V. II.

*And perished in the gainsaying of Corah.*

**A**Mong all the dismal consequences of that fatal day wherein the Honour of our Nation suffered together with our *Martyr'd Sovereign*, there is none which in this Place we ought to be more concerned for, than the *Dishonour* which was done to *Religion* by it. For if those things which were then acted among us, had been done among the most rude and barbarous Nations, though that had been enough to have made them for ever thought so; yet they might have been imputed to their ignorance in matters of *Civility* and *Religion*: but when they are committed not only by men who are called *Christians*, but under a pretence of a mighty zeal for their *Religion* too, Men will either think that *Religion* bad, which did give encouragement to such actions, or those persons extremely wicked, who could make use of a pretence of it for things so contrary to its nature and design. And on which of these two the blame will fall, may be soon discovered, when we consider that the *Christian Religion*, above all others, hath taken care to preserve the Rights of *Sovereignty*, by \* giving unto *Cæsar* <sup>Mat. 22<sup>1</sup></sup> *the things that are Cæsars*, and to make resistance unlawful by declaring † *that those who are guilty of it shall receive to themselves damnation*. But † *Rom.* <sup>13. 2<sup>o</sup></sup> as though bare resistance had been too mean and low a thing for them (notwithstanding what *Christ* and his *Apostles* had said) to shew themselves to be *Christians* of a higher rank than others; they imbrue their hands in the Blood of their *Sovereign* for a demonstration of their *Piety*, by the same figure by which they had destroyed Mens *Rights* to defend their *Liberties*, and fought against the *King* for preservation of his *Person*. But the actions of such Men could not have been so bad as they were, unless their pretences had been so great; for there can be no higher aggravation of a wicked action, than for Men to seem to be *Religious* in the doing of it. If the *Devil* himself were to preach *Sedition* to the World, he would never appear otherwise than as an *Angel of Light*: his pretence would be *Unity*, when he designed the greatest *Divisions*; and the preservation of *Authority*, when he laid the seeds

of Rebellion. But we might as well imagine that *the God of this World* (as the *Devil* is sometime called) should advance nothing but Peace and Holiness in it, as that *Christianity* should give the least countenance to what is contrary to either of them. Yet the wickedness of Men hath been so great upon Earth, as to call down Heaven it self to justify their impieties, and when they have found themselves unable to bear the burden of them, they would fain make *Religion* do it.

Such as these we have a description of in this short, but smart Epistle, *viz.* Men who pretend inspirations and impulses for the greatest villainies; who believed it a part of their Saintship to *despise Dominions, and speak evil of Dignities*; who thought the *Grace of God* signified very little, unless it serv'd to justify their most wicked actions,

These in all probability were the followers of *Simon Magus the Leviathan* of the Primitive Church, \* who destroyed all the natural differences of good and evil, † and made it lawful for Men in case of Persecution, to forswear their *Religion*. || The great part of his Doctrine being that his Disciples need not be afraid of the terrors of the Law, for they were free to do what they pleased themselves, because Salvation was not to be expected by good works, but only by the Grace of God: No wonder then, that such as these did turn the Grace of God into lasciviousness: And when it proved dangerous not to do it, would deny their Religion, to save themselves. For they had so high opinions of themselves, that they were the only Saints, that as \* *Epiphanius* tells us, they thought it *the Casting Pearls before Swine*, to expose themselves to danger before the Hea-

then Governours; by which they not only discovered what a mighty value they set upon themselves, but what mean and contemptible thoughts they had of that Authority which God had established in the world.

But this they would by no means allow, for they thought all the Governments of the world to be nothing else † but *the contrivance of some evil spirits to a-bridge men of that liberty which God and nature had given them*: And this is that *speaking evil of Dignities* which they are charged with, not

only by our *Apostle* here, but by *St. Peter* before him. Although the phrase used by || *St. Peter*, *δόξας βλασφημῶντες* may be taken (by the use of the word *βλασφημία* in the first of \* *Maccabees*) not for the bare contempt of Authority, expressed by reviling language, but for an open resistance of it; which the other is so natural an introduction to, that those who think and speak contemptibly of *Government*, do but want an occasion to manifest that their actions would be as bad as their thoughts and expressions are. And from hence *ἀντιλογία* here in the words of the Text is made use of to express one of the most remarkable seditions we read of, *viz.* that of *Corah* and his *Company* against *Moses* and *Aaron*; whose punishment for it did not deter these persons who went under the name of *Christian*, from joyning in seditious practices to the great dishonour of *Christianity*, and their own ruine. For there-

fore

\* Φασὶ γὰρ, ὅτι ὅσα νεμίξεται παρὰ ἀνθρώποις κακὰ εἶναι, ἔ κακὰ ἑσάρχει. ἀλλὰ φύσει καλὰ (ἐδὲν γὰρ ὅτι φύσει κακόν) τίς ἢ ἀνθρώποις νομίζεται εἶναι φαύλα. *Epiphani. heres. 27. p. 105. ed. Petav.*

† Φωροδίσεται ἢ ἔτος διαβολικὴν δύναμιν εἰσηγέμενος καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν, ἀπαλείψει θεῖαν αὐτῆς ἐκδιδάσκων. *Epiph. heres. 24. S. 5. p. 72.*

|| Τὸς δὲ εἰς αὐτὸν πνεύσεως ἐκέλευσε (Σίμων) μὴ προσέχειν ἐκείνοις (προσητάις) μὴ ἢ φοβήσθαι τὸν νόμον τῆς ἀπειθείας, ἀλλὰ προσέτερον ὡς ἐλευθέρους ἀπερ' ἀνέδελησάντων. ἔ γὰρ διὰ προσέτερον ἀμαρτῶν ἀλλὰ διὰ χάριτος τεύξεσθαι τῆς σωτηρίας. *Theodoret. heret. fab. l. 1. p. 193.*

\* Ἡμεῖς, φησὶν ἐσωσθὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι, οἱ ἢ ἄλλοι πάντες ὑπέσχεσθαι. καὶ διὰ τὸ εἶπε μὴ βάλῃτε τὰς μαργαρίτας ἐμπροσθεν τῶν χοίρων. *Epiph. her. 27. sect. 5.*

† *Ad utilitatem ergo gentium, terrenum regnum positum est à Deo: sed non à Diabolo, qui nunquam omnino quietus est, immo qui nec ipsas quidem gentes vult in tranquillo agere.* *Iren. advers. her. l. 5. c. 24.*

|| 2 Est. 2.  
10.

\* 1 Mac. 2.  
6:



fore the *Apostle* denounces a *Woe* against them in the beginning of the verse, and speaks of their ruine as certain as if they had been consumed by fire, or swallowed up by the earth, as *Corah* and his Accomplices were; *And they perished in the gainsaying of Corah.* In verb ἀπώλοντο, the *Aorist*, saith *Grotius*, is taken for the *future*, or *present*, and so implying that these courses did tend to their misery and ruine, and would unavoidably bring it upon them. If the evidence in history had been clear of the *Carpocratians* joyning with the *Jews* in the famous rebellion of *Barchochebas*, wherein such multitudes of *Christians* as well as *Heathens* were destroyed in *Africa*, *Egypt*, and other places, and the time of it had agreed with the time of writing this *Epistle*, I should then have thought that this had been the Rebellion here spoken of; for all the Actors in it were destroyed by the *Roman Power*, and some of the chief of them made publick examples of Justice for the deterring of others from the like practices. But however this be, we find these persons here charged with a sin of the same nature, with the gainsaying of *Corah*, and a judgment of the same nature, as the consequent of the sin; for they perished in their gainsaying, &c. And therefore we shall consider the words,

*V. David  
Canz. Chronolop. 1. 1.*

1. As relating to the fact of *Corah* and his company.  
2. As implying as great displeasure of *God* under the *Gospel* against the same kind of sin, as he discovered in the immediate destruction of those persons who were then guilty of it.

1. As relating to the fact of *Corah* and his company; and so the words lead us to the handling,

1. The nature of the *Faction* which was raised by them.

2. The Judgment that was inflicted upon them for it.

1. For understanding the nature of the *Faction*, we must enquire into the design that was laid, the persons that were engaged in it, the pretences that were made use of for it.

1. The *design* that was laid for that, and all other circumstances of the story, we must have resort to the account that is given of it, *Num. 16.* where we shall find that the bottom of the design was the sharing of the Government among themselves, which it was impossible for them to hope for, as long as *Moses* continued as a *King in Jesurun*, for so he is called, *Dent. 33. 5.* Him therefore they intend to lay aside, but this they knew to be a very difficult task, considering what wonders *God* had wrought by him in their deliverance out of *Egypt*, what wisdom he had hitherto shewed in the conduct of them, what care for their preservation, what integrity in the management of his power, what reverence the people did bear towards him, and what solemn vows and promises they had made of obedience to him. But ambitious and factious Men are never discouraged by such an appearance of difficulties; for they know they must address themselves to the people, and in the first place persuade them that they manage their interest against the usurpation of their Governours. For by that means they gain upon the peoples affections, who are ready to cry them up presently as the true *Patriots* and Defenders of their *Liberties* against the encroachment of *Princes*: and when they have thus insinuated themselves into the good opinion of the people, groundless suspicions, and unreasonable fears and jealousies will pass for arguments and demonstrations. Then they who can invent the most popular lies against the Government are accounted the Men of integrity, and they who most diligently spread the

most infamous reports, are the Men of honesty, because they are farthest from being *Flatterers* of the *Court*. The people take a strange pride, as well as pleasure, in hearing and telling all the faults of their *Governours*; for in doing so they flatter themselves in thinking they deserve to rule much better than those which do it. And the willingness they have to think so of themselves, makes them misconstrue all the actions of their *Superiours* to the worse sense, and then they find out plots in every thing, upon the people; whatever is done for the necessary maintenance of *Government*, is suspected to be a design meerly to exhaust the people to make them more unable to resist. If good *Laws* be made, these are said by factious men to be only intended for snares for the good people, but others may break them and go unpunished. If *Government* be strict and severe, then it is cruel and tyrannical; if mild and indulgent, then it is remiss and negligent. If *Laws* be executed, then the peoples *Liberties* be oppressed; if not, then it were better not to make *Laws*, than not to see them executed. If there be Wars, the people are undone by Taxes; if there be Peace, they are undone by Plenty. If extraordinary Judgments befall them, then they lament the sins of their *Governours*, and of the Times, and scarce think of their own. If miscarriages happen (as it is impossible always to prevent them) they charge the form of *Government* with them, which all sorts are subject to. Nay, it is seldom that *Governours* escape with their own faults, the People's are often laid upon them too. So here, *Numb. 16. 14. Moses* is charged with not carrying them into *Canaan*, when it was their own sins which kept them thence. Yea, so partial have the people generally been against their *Rulers*, when swayed by the power of Faction, that this hath made *Government* very difficult and displeasing; for whatever the actions of *Princes* are, they are liable to the censures of the people. Their bad actions being more publick, and their good therefore suspected of design, and the wiser *Governours* are, the more jealous the people are of them. For always the weakest part of mankind are the most suspicious; the less they understand things, the more designs they imagine are laid for them, and the best counsels are the soonest rejected by them. So that the wisest *Government* can never be secure from the jealousies of the people, and they that will raise a Faction against it will never want a party to side with them. For when could we ever have imagined a *Government* more likely to be free from this, than that which *Moses* had over the people of *Israel*? He being an extraordinary person for all the abilities of *Government*; one bred up in the *Egyptian Court*, and in no mean degree of honour, being called the Son of *Pharaohs* Daughter; one of great experience in the management of affairs, of great zeal for the good of his Country, as appeared by the tenderness of his peoples interest in their deliverance out of *Egypt*; one of great temper and meekness above all men of the earth; one who took all imaginable care for the good establishment of *Laws* among them; but above all these, one particularly chosen by God for this end, and therefore furnished with all the requisites of a good man, and an excellent *Prince*: yet for all these things a dangerous sedition is here raised against him, and that upon the common grounds of such things, *viz.* usurpation upon the Peoples rights, arbitrary *Government*, and ill management of affairs; Usurpation upon the peoples rights, *v. 4.* the *Faction* makes a *Remonstrance*, asserting the Priviledges of the people against *Moses* and *Aaron*; *Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the Congregation are holy every one of them,*  
and

and the Lord is among them : Wherefore then lift up you your selves above the Congregation of the Lord? As though they had said, We appear only in behalf of the *Fundamental Liberties* of the people both Civil and Spiritual ; we only seek to retrench the exorbitances of power, and some late innovations which have been among us ; if you are content to lay aside your power which is so dangerous and offensive to Gods holy people, we shall then sit down in quietness ; for alas it is not for ourselves that we seek these things (what are we?) but the *Cause of Gods people* is dearer to us than our lives, and we shall willingly sacrifice them in so good a *Cause*. And when *Moses* afterwards sends for the Sons of *Eliab* to come to him they peremptorily refuse all *Messages of Peace*, and with their <sup>\*</sup> *men of the sword* mentioned, v. 2. they make votes of *non-Ad-* <sup>\* V. 12, 13.</sup> *desse*, and break off all *Treaties* with him, and declare these for their reasons, that he did *dominando dominari*, as some render it, exercise an arbitrary and tyrannical power over the people, that he was guilty of breach of the trust committed to him, for he promised † *to bring them* <sup>† V. 14.</sup> *into a Land flowing with Milk and Honey, or give them inheritance of fields and vineyards*, but he had not done it, and instead of that, only deceives the people still with fair promises, and so *puts out their eyes* that they cannot see into the depth of his designs. So that now by the ill management of his *Trust*, the power was again devolved into the hands of the people, and they ought to take account of his actions. By which we see the design was under very fair and popular pretences to divest *Moses* of his *Government*, and then they doubted not but such *Zealous Patriots* as they had shewed themselves, should come to have the greatest share in it ; but this which they most aimed at, must appear least in view, and only *Necessity* and *Providence* must seem to cast that upon them, which was the first true motive they had to rebel against *Moses* and *Aaron*.

2. The *Persons* who were engaged in it. At first they were only some discontented *Levites* who murmured against *Moses* and *Aaron*, because they were not preferred to the *Priesthood*, and of these *Corah* was the chief. *R. Solomon* observes, That the reason of *Chorahs* discontent, was, That *Elizaphan* the Son of *Uzziel*, of the younger house to *Izhar* from whom *Corah* descended, was preferred before him by *Moses* to be *Prince* over the Sons of || *Kobath*. *Corah* being active and busie in his discon- || Numb. tents, had the opportunity of drawing in some of the Sons of *Reuben*, <sup>3. 30.</sup> for they pitched their tents near each other, <sup>\*</sup> *both on the South side of* <sup>\* Num. 2. 10. 3. 29.</sup> *the Tabernacle of the Congregation* ; and these were discontented on the account of their *Tribe* having lost the privilege of *Primogeniture*. Thus whatever the pretences are, how fair and popular soever in the opposition men make to authority, ambition and private discontents are the true beginners of them : but these must be covered over with the deepest *disimulation*, with most vehement *Protestations* to the contrary, nothing must be talked of but a mighty zeal for *Religion*, and the publick *interest*. So † *Josephus* tells us concerning *Corah*, that while he <sup>† Joseph. antiq. Jud. l. 4. c. 2.</sup> carried on his own ambitious designs, with all the arts of sedition and a popular eloquence, insinuating into the peoples minds strange suggestions against *Moses* his *Government*, as being a meer politick design of his to enslave the people of *God*, and advance his own family and interest, ἐσέλθο τὰ νόμῳ προνοήσασθαι δοκέειν, he would seem to regard nothing but the publick good. If fair Pretences, and glorious Titles will serve to cheat the people into their own miseries, and the sad effects of *Rebellion* ; they shall never want those who will *enslave* them for

for the sake of *Liberty*, *undo* them for the publick good, and *destroy* them with designs of *Reformation*. For nothing is more popular than *Rebellion* in the beginning; nothing less in the issue of it. And the only true reason that it is ever so, is from the want of wisdom and judgment in the generality of mankind, who seldom see to the end of things, and hardly distinguish between the names and nature of them, till their own dear bought experience hath taught them the difference. Sedition is of the nature, and hath the inseparable properties of *Sin*; for it is conceived with pleasure, brought forth with pain, and ends in death and misery. Nothing enters upon the stage with a braver shew and appearance, but however prosperous for a time it may continue, it commonly meets with a fatal end. But it is with this sin as to this world, as it is with others as to the next; Men when they are betrayed into them, are carried away and transported with the pleasing temptations, not considering the unspeakable misery that follows after them. So that what the *Devils* advantage is in order to the ruin of mens souls, is the advantage of seditious persons over the less understanding people; they both tempt with an appearance of good, and equally deceive them which hearken to them. But as we still find, that notwithstanding all the grave admonitions, the sober counsels, the rational discourses, the perswasive arguments which are used to deter men from the practice of sin, they will still be such *Fools* to yield to the *Devils* temptations against their own *welfare*: So, neither the blessings of a continued *Peace*, nor the miseries of an intestine *War*, neither the security of a settled *Government*, nor the constant danger of *Innovations* will hinder men of fiery and restless spirits from raising combustions in a Nation, though themselves perish in the *Flames* of them. This we find here was the case of *Corah* and his company; they had forgotten the groans of their captivity in *Egypt*, and the Miracles of their deliverance out of it, and all the faithful services of *Moses*, and *Aaron*; they considered not the difficulties of *Government*, nor the impossibilities of satisfying the ambitious desires of all pretenders; they regarded not that *God* from whom their power was derived, nor the account they must give to him for their resistance of it; nothing but a full *Revenge* upon the Government can satisfy them, by leaving no means unattempted for its overthrow, though themselves be consumed by the fall of it. It were happy for *Government* if these turbulent spirits could be singled out from the rest in their first attempts; but that is the usual subtilty of such men; when they find themselves aimed at, they run into the common herd, and persuade the people that they are equally concerned with themselves in the present danger, that though the pretence be only against faction and sedition, the design is the slavery and oppression of the *People*. This they manage at first by grave nods, and secret whispers, by deep sighs, and extatick motions, by far fetched discourses, and tragical stories, till they find the people capable of receiving their impressions, and then seem most unwilling to mention that which it was at first their design to discover. By such arts as these *Corah* had prepared, as \* *Josephus* tells us, almost the whole Camp of *Israel* for a popular tumult, so that they were like to have stoned *Moses* before he was aware of it; and it seems the Faction had gained a mighty interest among the people, when although *God* so severely and remarkably punished the heads of it, yet the very next day all the Congregation of the Children of *Israel* murmured against *Moses* and *Aaron*, saying, † *Ye have killed the people of the Lord*. What a mark of

\* *Joseph.*  
*antiq. l. 4.*  
c. 2.

† *Numb.*  
16. 41.

God's people was sedition grown among them! When these men were accounted *Saints* in sight of Heaven; and *Martyrs*, though God himself destroyed them. They were men who were only *sanctified* by *Rebellion*: and shewed no other fruits of their piety but disobedience to Authority. But the danger had not been so great, how loud soever the complaints had been, if only the ruder multitude had been gained to the Favour of *Corah* and his party: for these wanted heads to manage them, and some *Countenance* of *Authority* to appear under; and for this purpose they had drawn to their Faction 250 *Princes of the Assembly*, \* famous in the *Congregation*, men of *Renown*, i. e. Members of the great *Council* of the *Nation*. Whom *Moses* was wont to call and advise with about the publick Affairs of it; such who sate in *Comitiis Senatorum*, as *Paul Fagius* tells us, therefore said to be קריאי מרצר such as were called to the great *Assembly* which sate in † *Parliament at the door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation*, which was the place where they met together. These were the *Heads* of the *Tribes*, and the *Captains* of *thousands*, and the men of the greatest *Fame* and *Authority* among the *People*, who *Moses* assembled together for *advice* and *counsel*, as often as he saw just occasion for it. And as far as I can find were distinct from the great *Sanhedrin*, which seemed to be rather a constant *Court of Judicature* which sate to receive *Appeals* from *Inferiour Courts*, and to determine such difficult *Causes* which were reserved peculiarly for it, as about *Apostase* of a *whole Tribe*, the case of false *Prophets*, and the like. But these 250 men did far exceed the whole number of the *Sanhedrin*; and the *Heads* of the *Tribes*, and the *Elders* of *Israel* were summoned together upon any very weighty occasion, by *Moses* both before and after the institution of the *Sanhedrin*. And now since the *Faction* had gained so great strength by the accession of so great a number of the most leading men among the *People*, we may expect they should soon declare their intentions, and publish the grounds of their entering into such a combination against *Moses*.

3. Which is the next thing to be spoken to, viz. the colours and pretences under which these persons sought to justify the proceedings of the Faction. Which were these two.

1. *The asserting the Rights and Liberties of the people in opposition to the Government of Moses.*

2. *The freeing themselves from the encroachments upon their Spiritual Privileges, which were made by the Usurpation of Aaron and the Priesthood.*

1. *The asserting the Rights and Liberties of the People in opposition to the Government of Moses.* || *Is it a small thing, say they, that thou hast brought us up out of a Land that floweth with Milk and Honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thy self altogether a Prince over us? And before, their charge was\* that Moses and Aaron took too much upon them, in lifting up themselves above the Congregation of the Lord.* Which † *Josephus* more at large explains, telling us that the great accusation of *Moses* was, that out of his ambition and affectation of Power, he had taken upon himself the Government of the people without their consent, that he made use of his pretence of Familiarity with God only for a Politick end, that by this means he debarred the people of that *Liberty* which God had given them, and no man ought to take from them, that they were all a || *Free-born people*, and equally the *Children of Abraham*, and therefore there was no reason they should depend upon the will of a *single Person*, who

|| Num. 13.  
\* V. 3  
† Joseph.  
l. 2. c. 2.  
|| Συμψέ-  
σεν δὲ τῷ  
πλήθει  
τὸς τοῖς-  
τες ἐν  
λαυθάρων  
σπουδῆς  
καὶ ὄσαν,  
ἡ μὲν πα-  
ρὰ θεῶν εἰς  
δύναμιν  
ἐβούτο  
παρεῖναι  
ἔχεν πο-  
λύτας. Jo-  
sephus Ant.  
l. 4. c. 2.  
who p. 103.

who by his *Politick Arts* had brought them to the greatest necessities, that he might rule them the better; Wherefore *Corah*, as though he had been already *President* of a *High-Court* of *Justice* upon *Moses* their *King*, determines, That it was necessary for the *Common-wealth*, that such enemies to the *Publick Interest* should be discovered and punished; lest if they be let alone in their *Usurpations* of *Power*, they declare themselves open enemies when it will be too late to oppose them. There were then two great Principles among them by which they thought to defend themselves.

1. That *Liberty* and a *Right to Power* is so inherent in the *People*, that it cannot be taken from them.

2. That in case of *Usurpation* upon that *Liberty* of the people, they may resume the exercise of *Power*, by punishing those who are guilty of it.

1. That *Liberty*, and a *Right to Power*, is inseparable from the *People*; *libertatis patrocinium suscipiunt*, saith *Calvin*, upon *Corah* and his company; and I believe they will be found to be the first assertors of this kind of *Liberty* that ever were in the world. And happy had it been for us in this Nation, if *Corah* had never found any *Disciples* in it. For what a blessed *Liberty* was this which *Corah* aimed at, viz. to change one excellent Prince, as *Moses* was, for 250 *Tyrants*, besides *Corah* and the Sons of *Reuben*? What just and equal liberty was it which *Moses* did deprive them of? It was only the *Liberty* of destroying themselves, which all the power he had could hardly keep them from. Could there be any greater *Liberty* than delivering them out of the house of bondage? and was not *Moses* the great Instrument in effecting it? Could there be greater *Liberty* than for their whole Nation to be preserved from all the designs of their enemies to enjoy their own *Laws* and matters of *Justice* to be duly administered amongst them? and had they not all these under the Government of *Moses*? What means then this Out-cry for *Liberty*? Is it that they would have had no *Government* at all among them, but that every one might have done what he pleased himself? This indeed were a desirable *Liberty*, if a man could have it alone: but when every one thinks that he is but one, though he be free; and every one else is as free as he, but though their *freedom* be equal to his, his *Power* is not equal to theirs; and therefore to bring things to a more just proportion, every one must part with some power for a great deal of security. If any man can imagine himself in such a *state* of *confusion*, which some improperly call a *state* of *nature*; let him consider, whether the contentment he could take in his own liberty and power to defend himself, would ballance the fears he would have of the injury which others in the same state might be able to do him. Not that I think meer fear made men at first enter into Societies, for there is a natural inclination in mankind to it, and one of the greatest pleasures of humane life lies in the enjoyment of it. But what other considerations incline men to, fear makes reasonable, though men part with some supposed liberty for the enjoyment of it. So that the utmost liberty is destroyed by the very nature of *Government*, and nothing can be more unreasonable than for men to quarrel with *Government* for that, which they cannot enjoy and the preservation of themselves together. Which alone makes the desire of *Power* reasonable, and if the preservation of our selves in our rights and properties may be had without it, all that the want of *Liberty* signifies, is, that men have all the conveniences of *Power* without the trouble and the cares of it. And if this be not a more desirable *Liberty* than  
the

the other, let any rational man judge. The pretence of *Liberty* then in this sense against *Government*, is, that men are *Fools* in taking the best care to preserve themselves, that *Laws* are but instruments of *Slavery*, and every single man is better able to defend himself, than the united strength of a People in *Society* is to defend him. And this kind of *Liberty* we may justly think will be desired by none but mad-men, and beasts of prey. It follows then, that what *Liberty* is inconsistent with all *Government*, must never be pleaded against one sort of it. But is there then so great a degree of *Liberty* in one mode of *Government* more than another, that it should be thought reasonable to disturb *Government*, merely to alter the form of it? Would it have been so much better for the people of *Israel* to have been governed by the 250 men here mentioned, than by *Moses*? Would not they have required the same subjection and obedience to themselves, though their commands had been much more unreasonable than his? What security can there be that every one of these shall not be worse in all respects than him whom they were so willing to lay aside; and if one be thought troublesome, what *Liberty* and ease is there when their name is *Legion*? So that the folly of these popular pretences is as great as the sin in being persuaded by them.

And it may be they have not thought amiss who have attributed a great part of that disturbance of the Peace of *Kingdoms*, under a pretence of popular *Government*, to an unjust admiration of those *Greek* and *Roman* Writers, who have unreasonably set up *Liberty* in opposition to *Monarchy*. But some of the wisest of them have given us a truer account of these things, and have told us, that it was impossible the *Roman* State could have been preserved longer, unless it had submitted to an \* *Imperial Power*; for the popular heats and factions were so great, that the annual election of *Magistrates*, was but another name for a *tumult*; and as *Dio* goes on † the name of popular *Government* is far more plausible, but the benefits of *Monarchy* are far greater; it being much easier to find one good than many; and though one be accounted difficult, the other is almost impossible. And as he elsewhere well observes, the flourishing of a *Common-wealth* depends upon its poverty; that being alone able to unite the minds of the *Governours*, who in a plentiful state, not set about with enemies, will be grasping at their own private interests, and fall naturally from thence into divisions and animosities; but the flourishing of the *Monarchy* lies in the riches of it, the *Prince* and the *People* having the same interest, and being rich or poor together. So that we see the notion of *Liberty*, and the exercise of power in *Government*, is so far from being an inseparable property of the people, that the proper notion of it is inconsistent with *Government*, and that which lies in the enjoyments of our *Rights and Properties*, is so far from being inconsistent with *Monarchy*, that they are more advanced by that, than by any other way of *Government*.

2. Another principle which tends to the subverting *Government* under a pretence of *Liberty*, is, that in case of *Usurpation* upon the *Rights* of the *People*, they may resume the exercise of *Power*, and punish the *Supreme Magistrate* himself, if he be guilty of it. Than which there can be no principle imagined more destructive to civil *Societies*, and repugnant to the very nature of *Government*. For it destroys all the obligations of *Oaths and Compacts*; it makes the solemnest bonds of obedience signify nothing when the people shall think fit to declare it: it

makes every prosperous *Rebellion* just; for no doubt when the power is in the *Rebels* hands, they will justify themselves and condemn their Sovereign. (And if *Corah*, *Dathan* and *Abiram* had succeeded in their Rebellion against *Moses*, no doubt they would have been called the *Keepers* of the *Liberties* of *Israel*.) It makes all Government dangerous to the persons in whom it is, considering the unavoidable infirmities of it, and the readiness of people to misconstrue the actions of their *Princes*, and their incapacity to judge of them: it not being fit that the reasons of all counsels of *Princes* should be divulged by *Proclamations*. So that there can be nothing wanting to make *Princes* miserable, but that the people want *Power* to make them so. And the supposition of this principle will unavoidably keep up a constant jealousy between the *Prince* and his people; for if he knows their minds, he will think it reasonable to secure himself by all means against their *Power*, and endeavour to keep them as unable to resist as may be: whereby all mutual confidence between a *Prince* and his *People* will be destroyed: and there can be no such way to bring in an arbitrary *Government* into a *Nation*, as that which such Men pretend, to be the only means to keep it out. Besides, this must necessarily engage a *Nation* in endless disputes about the forfeiture of *Power* into whose hands it falls: whether into the people in common, or some persons particularly chosen by the people for that purpose: for in an established *Government* according to their principles, the King himself is the true representative of the people; others may be chosen for some particular purposes, as proposing *Laws*, &c. but these cannot pretend by virtue of that choice, to have the full power of the people; and withal, whatever they do against the consent of the people is unlawful; and their power is forfeited by attempting it.

But on the other side, what mighty danger can there be in supposing the persons of *Princes* to be so sacred, that no sons of violence ought to come near to hurt them? Have not all the ancient *Kingdoms* and *Empires* of the world flourished under the supposition of an unaccountable power in *Princes*? That hath been thought by those who did not own a derivation of their power from *God*, but a just security to their persons; considering the hazards, and the care of Government which they undergo? Have not the people who have been most jealous of their *Liberties*, been fain to have recourse to an unaccountable power, as their last refuge in case of their greatest necessities? I mean the *Romans* in their *Dictators*. And if it were thought not only reasonable, but necessary then, ought it not to be preserved inviolable, where the same *Laws* do give it by which Men have any right to challenge any power at all? Neither doth this give *Princes* the liberty to do what they list; for the *Laws* by which they Govern, do fence in the *rights* and *properties* of Men; and *Princes* do find so great conveniency, ease and security in their Government by *Law*, that the fence of that will keep them far better within the compass of *Laws*, than the *Peoples* holding a Rod over them, which the best *Princes* are like to suffer the most by, and bad will but grow desperate by it. Good *Princes* will never need such a curb because their oaths and promises, their love and tenderness towards their people, the fence they have of a *Power* infinitely greater than theirs, to which they must give an account of all their actions, will make them govern as the *Fathers* of their Country; and bad *Princes* will never value it, but will endeavour by all possible means to secure themselves against



it. So that no inconveniency can be possibly so great on the supposition of this unaccountable *Power* in Sovereign *Princes*, taking it in the general, and meerly on the account of reason, as the unavoidable mischiefs of that *Hypotheses*, which places all power originally in the people, and notwithstanding all *oaths* and *bonds* whatsoever to obedience, gives them the liberty to resume it when they please: which will always be when that *Spirit of Faction* and *Sedition* shall prevail among them, which ruled here in *Corah* and his company.

2. Another pretence of this Rebellion of *Corah*, was, *the freeing themselves from the encroachments upon their spiritual privileges which were made by the usurpations of Aaron and the Priesthood.* This served for a very popular pretence, for they knew no reason that one *Tribe* should engross so much of the wealth of the Nation to themselves, and have nothing to do but to attend the service of God for it. What, say they, *are not all the Lord's people holy?* Why may not then all they offer up incense to the Lord, as well as the Sons of *Aaron*? How many publick uses might those *Revenues* serve for, which are now to maintain *Aaron*, and all the Sons of *Levi*? But if there must be some to attend the service of God, why may not the meanest of the people serve for that purpose, those who can be serviceable for nothing else? Why must there be an order of *Priesthood* distinct from that of *Levites*? why a *High Priest* above all the *Priests*? what is there in all their office which one of the common people may not do as well as they? cannot they flay the sacrifices, and offer incense, and do all other parts of the *Priestly Office*? So that at last they make all this to be a Politick design of *Moses* only to advance his own *Family* by making his *Brother High-Priest*, and to have all the *Priests* and *Levites* at his devotion, to keep the people the better in awe. This hath always been the quarrel at *Religion*, by those who seldom pretend to it, but with a design to destroy it. For who would ever have minded the constant attendance at the *Temple*, if no encouragements had been given to those who were employed in it? Or is not *Religion* apt enough to be despised of it self, by Men of profane minds, unless it be rendered more mean and contemptible by the *Poverty* of those who are devoted to it? Shall not *God* be allowed the priviledge of every *Master* of a *Family*, to appoint the ranks and orders of his own servants, and to take care they be provided for, as becomes those who wait upon him? What a dishonour had this been to the true *God*, when those who worshipped *false Gods* thought nothing too great for those who are employed in the service of them? But never any yet cried, but he that had a mind to betray his *Master*, to what purpose is all this waste? Let *God* be honoured as he ought to be, let *Religion* come in for its share among all the things which deserve encouragement, and those who are employed in the Offices of it, enjoy but what *God*, and *Reason*, and the *Laws* of their *Country* give them, and then we shall see it was nothing, but the discontent and *faction* of *Corah* and his company which made any encroachment of *Aaron* and the *Priesthood* any pretence for Rebellion.

But all these pretences would not serve to make them escape the severe hand of divine justice; for in an extraordinary and remarkable manner he made them suffer the just desert of their sin, for they perished in their contradiction: which is the next thing to be considered, viz.

2. *The Judgment* which was inflicted upon them for it. They had provoked *Heaven* by their sin, and disturbed the *Earth* by their *Faction*; and the *Earth* as if it were moved with indignation against them trembled

bled and *shook*, as *Josephus* saith, like waves that are tossed with a mighty wind, and then with a horrid noise it rends asunder, and opens its mouth to swallow those in its bowels who were unfit to live upon the face of it. They had been dividing the people, and the earth to their amazement and ruine divides it self under their feet, as though it had been design'd on purpose, that in their punishment themselves might feel, and others see the mischief of their sin. Their seditious principles seemed to have infected the ground they stood upon; the earth of a sudden proves as unquiet and troublesome as they; but to rebuke their madness, it was only in obedience to him who made it the executioner of his wrath against them; and when it had done its office, it is said, \* *that the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the Congregation.* Thus the earth having revenged it self against the disturbers of its peace, Heaven presently appears with a *flaming fire*, taking vengeance upon the 250 Men, who in opposition to † *Aaron*, had usurped the Priestly office, in offering incense before the Lord. Such a Fire, if we believe the same Historian, which far outwent the most dreadful eruptions of *Ætna* or *Vesuvius*, which neither the art of Man, nor the power of the wind could raise; which neither the burning of Woods nor Cities could parallel; but such a Fire which the wrath of God alone could kindle, whose light could be outdone by nothing but the heat of it. Thus Heaven and Earth agree in the punishment of such disturbers of Government, and God by this remarkable judgment upon them hath left it upon record to all ages, that all the world may be convinced how displeasing to him the sin of faction and sedition is. For God takes all this that was done against *Moses* and *Aaron*, as done against himself. For they are said to be gathered together against the Lord, v. 11. to provoke the Lord, v. 30. And the fire is said to come out from the Lord, v. 25. And afterwards it is said of them; || *This is that Moses and Dathan and Abiram, who strove against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Corah, when they strove against the Lord.* By which we see God interprets striving against the Authority appointed by him, to be a striving against himself. God looks upon himself as immediately concerned in the Government of the world; for by him Princes reign, and they are his Vicegerents upon earth; and they who resist, resist not a meer appointment of the people, but \* *an Ordinance of God*; and they who do so shall in the mildest sense receive a *severe punishment* from him. Let the pretences be never so popular, the persons never so great and famous; nay, though they were of the great Council of the Nation, yet we see God doth not abate of his severity upon any of these considerations.

This was the first formed sedition that we read of against *Moses*, the people had been murmuring before, but they wanted heads to manage them: Now all things concur to a most dangerous Rebellion upon the most popular pretences of Religion and Liberty, and now God takes the first opportunity of declaring his hatred of such actions; that others might hear, and fear, and do no more so presumptuously. This hath been the usual method of divine Judgments; the first of the kind hath been most remarkably punished in this life, that by it they may see how hateful such things are to God; but if Men will venture upon them notwithstanding, God doth not always punish them so much in this world (though he sometimes doth) but reserves them, without repentance, to his Justice in the world to come. The first man that sinned was made an example of God's Justice; The first world; the first publick attempt

against

\* Numb.  
16. 33.

† V. 35.

|| Numb.  
16. 9.

\* Rom.  
13. 1, 2.

against Heaven at *Babel* after the plantation of the world again; the first Cities which were so generally corrupted after the flood; the first breaker of the *Sabbath* after the *Law*; the first offerers with strange fire; the first lookers into the *Ark*, and here the first popular Rebellion and Usurpers of the office of *Priesthood*. God doth hereby intend to preserve the honour of his *Laws*, he gives men warning enough by one exemplary punishment, and if notwithstanding that, they will commit the same sin, they may thank themselves if they suffer for it, if not in this life, yet in that to come. And that good effect this Judgment had upon that people, that although the next day 14000 suffered for murmuring at the destruction of these men, yet we do not find that any Rebellion was raised among them afterwards upon these popular pretences of *Religion*, and the *Power* of the *People*. While their Judges continued (who were *Kings*, without the state and title of *Kings*) they were observed with reverence, and obeyed with diligence. When afterwards they desired a *King*, with all the *Pomp* and *Grandeur* which other Nations had (which *Samuel* acquaints them with, viz. \* *the Officers* \* 1 Sam. 8. 11. and *Souldiers*, the large *Revenues* he must have) though their *King* was disowned by *God*, yet the people held firm in their *obedience* to him, and *David* himself, though anointed to be *King*, persecuted by *Saul*, and though he might have pleaded *Necessity* and *Providence* as much as any ever could; (when *Saul* was strangely delivered into his hands,) yet we see what an opinion he had of the person of a bad King, † *The Lord* † 1 Sam. 26. 9. forbid that I should do this thing against my Master the Lord's Anointed, to stretch forth my hand against him, seeing he is the Anointed of the Lord. And lest we should think it was only his *Modesty* or his *Policy* which kept him from doing it, he afterwards upon a like occasion declares it was only the sin of doing it, which kept him from it. || *For who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's Anointed and be guiltless?* Not as tho' || 1 Sam. 26. 9. *David* could not do it without the power of the *Sanhedrin*, as it hath been pretended by the Sons of *Corah* in our age; for he excepts none; he never seizes upon him to carry him prisoner to be tryed by the *Sanhedrin*, nor is there any foundation for any such power in the *Sanhedrin* over the persons of their *Sovereigns*. It neither being contained in the grounds of its institution, nor any precedent occurring in the whole story of the Bible, which gives the least countenance to it: Nay several passages of *Scripture* utterly overthrow it, for how could *Solomon* have said, \* *Where the word of a King is, there is power; and who may say un-* \* Ecclef. 8. 4. *to him, what dost thou?* if by the constitution of their Government, the *Sanhedrin* might have controlled him in what he said or did. But have not several of the modern *Jews* said so? Granting that some have; yet so they have spoken many unreasonable and foolish things besides; but yet none of these have said, that it was in the power of the *Sanhedrin* to depose their *Kings*, or put them to death; all that they say is, that in the cases expressed by the *Law*, if the *Kings* do transgress, the *Sanhedrin* had the power of inflicting the penalty of *scourging*, which yet they deny to have had any *infamy* in it among them. But did not *David* transgress the *Law* in his murder and adultery? Did not *Solomon* in the multitude of his *Wives* and *Idolatry*, yet where do we read that the *Sanhedrin* ever took cognizance of these things? And the more ancient *Jews* do say, † *That the King was not to be judged,* as † Tit. Sanhed. c. 2. is plain in the Text of the *Misna*, however the Expositors have taken a liberty to contradict it; but as far as we can find, without any foundation

\* *Nach-*  
*man. in*  
*Deut. p.*  
196.

† 1 *Sam.*  
26. 10.

dation of reason: and R. *Jeremiah* in \* *Nachmanides*, saith expressly, *That no creature may judge the King, but the holy and blessed God alone.* But we have an Authority far greater than his, viz. of *David's* in this case, who after he hath denied that *any man can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's Anointed, and be guiltless*; in the very next words he submits the judgment of him only to *God himself*, saying, † *As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle and perish.* He thought it sufficient to leave the judgment of those things to *God*, whose power over *Princes* he knew was enough if well considered by them, to keep them in awe. We have now dispatched the first consideration of the words of the Text as they relate to the fact of *Corah* and his company.

2. We ought now to enquire, whether the *Christian Doctrine* hath made any alteration in these things; or whether that gives any greater encouragement to faction and sedition than the *Law* did, when it is masked under a pretence of zeal for *Religion* and *Liberty*. But it is so far from it, that what *God* then declared to be displeasing to him by such remarkable judgments, hath been now more fully manifested by frequent precepts and vehement exhortations, by the most weighty arguments, and the constant practice of the first and the best of *Christians*, and by the black character which is set upon those who under a pretence of *Christian Liberty* did despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities, and follow *Corah* in his Rebellion, however they may please themselves with greater light, than former ages had in this matter, they are said to be such || *for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.* It would take up too much time to examine the frivolous evasions and ridiculous distinctions by which they would make the case of the *Primitive Christians* in not resisting Authority, so much different from theirs, who have not only done it, but in spite of *Christianity* have pleaded for it. Either they said they wanted strength, or courage, or the countenance of the *Senate*, or did not understand their own *Liberty*; when all their obedience was only due to those precepts of the *Gospel*, which make it so great a part of *Christianity* to be subject to *Principalities and Powers*, and which the \* *Tit. 3. 1.* Teachers of the *Gospel* had particularly given them in charge \* *to put the people in mind of.*

|| *Jude*  
v. 13.

And happy had it been for us if this *Doctrine* had been more sincerely preached, and duly practised in this Nation; for we should then never have seen those sad times, which we can now no otherwise think of, than of the devouring *Fire*, and raging *Pestilence*, i. e. of such dreadful judgments which we have smarted so much by, that we heartily pray we may never feel them again: For then fears and jealousies began our miseries, and the curse so often denounced against *Meroz*, fell upon the whole Nation; when the Sons of *Corah* managed their own ambitious designs against *Moses* and *Aaron* (the *King* and the *Church*) under the same pretences of *Religion* and *Liberty*. And when the pretence of *Religion* was broken into *Schisms*, and *Liberty* into oppression of the *People*, it pleased *God* out of his secret and unsearchable judgments to suffer the Sons of *Violence* to prevail against the *Lord's Anointed*; and then they would know no difference between his being conquered and guilty. They could find no way to justify their former wickedness, but by adding more: The consciousness of their own Guilt, and the fears of the Punishment due to it, made them unquiet and thoughtful, as long as his life and presence did upbraid them with the one, and made them fearful of the other.

other. And when they found the greatness and constancy of his mind, the firmness of his piety, the zeal he had for the true interest of the people, would not suffer him to betray his *Trust* for the saving of his life, they charge him with their own guilt, and make him suffer because they had deserved to do it. And as if it had not been enough to have abused the names of *Religion* and *Liberty* before, they resolve to make the very name of *Justice* to suffer together with their *King*: by calling that infamous company, who condemned their *Sovereign*, *A High Court of Justice*, which trampled under foot the *Laws* both of God and men. But lest the world should imagine they had any shame left in their sins, they make the people witnesses of his *Murder*; and pretend the *Power* of the *People* for doing that, which they did detest and abhor. Thus fell our *Royal Martyr* a Sacrifice to the fury of unreasonable men; who either were so blind as not to see his worth, or rather so bad as to hate him for it. And as God gave once to the people of the *Jews* a *King* in his Anger, being provoked to it by their sins, we have cause to say, that upon the same account he took away one of the best of *Kings* from us in his wrath. But blessed be that God, who in the midst of judgment was pleased to remember mercy, in the miraculous preservation, and glorious restoration of our *Gracious Sovereign*; let us have a care then of abusing the mercies of so great a deliverance to quit other ends than God intended it for; lest he be provoked to say to us, as he did of old to the *Jews*, \* *But if you shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed,* \* 1 Sam. 12. 25. *both ye and your King.* And if we look on this as a dreadful judgment, let us endeavour to prevent it by a timely and sincere reformation of our lives, and by our hearty supplications to God that he would preserve the person of our *Sovereign* from all the attempts of violence, that he would so direct his counsels, and prosper his affairs, that *His Government may be a long and publick Blessing to these Nations.*

S E R

# SERMON VIII.

Preached at

## Guild-Hall Chappel:

June 9th. 1671.

MATTHEW XXI. 43.

*Therefore say I unto you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a Nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*

**T**HE time was now very near approaching, wherein the Son of God was to suffer an accursed death by the hands of ungrateful men: and to let them see that he laid no impossible command upon men when he bid them *\* love their enemies*, he expresses the truest kindness himself toward those who designed his destruction. For what can be imagined greater towards such, whose malice was like to end in nothing short of their own ruine, than by representing to them the evils they must suffer, to dissuade them from that, which they intended to do? But if neither the sense of their future miseries, nor their present sins will at all abate their fury or assuage their malice, nothing is then left for kindness to shew it self by, but by lamenting their folly, bemoaning their obstinacy, and praying God to have pity upon them, who have so little upon themselves. And all these were very remarkable in the carriage of our Blessed Saviour towards his most implacable enemies: he had taken care to instruct them by his Doctrine, to convince them by his Miracles, to oblige them by the first offers of the greatest mercy; but all these things had no other effect upon them, than to heighten their malice, increase their rage, and make them more impatient till they had destroyed him. But their stupidity made him more sensible of their folly, and their obstinacy stirred up his compassion towards them, insomuch that the nearer he approached to his own sufferings, the greater sense he expressed of theirs. For he was no sooner come within view of that bloody City, wherein he was within few days to suffer *by*, as well as *for* the sins of men; but his compassion breaks forth, not only by his weeping over it; but by that passionate expression, which is abrupt only by the force of his grief: † *If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.* And when he was within the City, he could not mention the desolation which was to come

\* Matth. 5.  
44.

† Luk. 19.  
41, 42.

come

come upon it for all the righteous blood which had been spilt there, but he presently subjoyns, \* *O Hierusalem, Hierusalem, thou that killest* <sup>Matth.</sup> *the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would* <sup>23 37.</sup> *I have gathered thy Children together, as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her wings and ye would not?* what words could more emphatically express the love and tenderness of Christ towards his greatest enemies than these do? especially considering that he knew how busie they were in contriving his sufferings, while he was so passionately lamenting theirs. And when their malice had done its utmost upon him, and they saw him hanging upon the Cross and ready to yield up his last breath, he imployes the remainder of it in begging pardon for them, in those patheticall words † *Father. forgive them for they know not what they do.* <sup>† Luke</sup> <sup>21. 34.</sup> By all which we see, that what punishments soever the Jewish nation underwent afterwards for the great sin of crucifying the Lord of life, were no effect of meer revenge from him upon them, but the just judgment of God which they had drawn upon themselves by their own obstinacy and wilful blindness.

And that they might not think themselves surprized, when the dreadful effects of God's anger should seize upon them, our Saviour as he drew nearer to the time of his sufferings gives them more frequent and serious warnings of the sad consequence of their incorrigibleness under all the means of cure, which had been used among them. For they were so far from being amended by them, that they not only despised the remedy, but the Physicians too; (as though they were a small thing) they beat, they wound, they kill those who came to cure them: but as if it had not been enough to have done these things to servants, (to let the world see how dangerous it is to attempt the cure of incorrigible sinners) when God sent his own Son to them, expecting they should reverence him, they find a peculiar reason for taking him out of the way, || *for then the inheritance would be their own.* But so miserably || <sup>V. 38.</sup> do sinners miscarry in their designs for their advantage, that those things which they build their hopes the most upon prove the most fatal and pernicious to them: When these persons thought themselves sure of the inheritance by killing the Son, that very sin of theirs, not only put them out of possession, but out of the hopes of recovering what interest they had in it before. For upon this it is that our Saviour here saith in the words of the Text, *Therefore say I unto you, that the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a Nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*

Which words are the application which our Saviour makes of the foregoing Parable concerning the vineyard, which it seems the Chief Priests and Pharisees, did not apprehend themselves to be concern'd in, till he brought the application of it so close to them; so that then they find they had condemned themselves, when they so readily passed so severe a sentence upon those husbandmen, who had so ill requited the Lord of the Vineyard for all the care he had taken about it, that instead of sending him the fruits of it, they abuse his messengers, and at last murder his Son. When therefore Christ asks them, \* *When the Lord* <sup>V. 40.</sup> *therefore of the Vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?* They thought the case so plain, that they never take time to consider, or go forth to advise upon it, but bring in a present answer upon the evidence of the fact. † *They say unto him, he will miserably destroy those* <sup>† V. 41.</sup> *wicked men, and will let out his Vineyard to other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.* Little did they think what a dread-

ful sentence they passed upon themselves and their own Nation in these words; little did they think that hereby they condemned their Temple to be burned, their City to be destroyed, their Country to be ruined, their Nation to be Vagabonds over the face of the earth; little did they think that herein they justified God in all the miseries which they suffered afterwards, for in these words they vindicate God and condemn themselves, they acknowledge God's Justice in the severest punishments he should inflict upon such obstinate wretches. Our Saviour having gained this confession from them, and so made it impossible for them to start back in charging God with injustice in punishing them; he now applies it to themselves in these words, which I suppose, ought immediately to follow the 41. verse, *Therefore say I unto you the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, &c.* Wherein we have,

1. The greatest judgment which can ever befall a people, which is *the taking away the Kingdom of God from them.*

2. The greatest mercy that can ever be vouchsafed to a Nation, which is God's giving his Kingdom to it. *And give it to a Nation, &c.*

In the Judgment we consider the cause of it, *therefore say I unto you, &c.* which is either, more general as referring to all going before, and so it makes the taking away the Kingdom of God to be the just punishment of an incorrigible people; or more particular as referring to the sin of the Jews in crucifying Christ, and so it makes the guilt of that sin to be the cause of all the miseries, which that nation hath undergone since that time.

In the latter part we may consider the terms upon which God either gives or continues his Kingdom to a Nation, and that is, *bringing forth the fruits thereof.*

We consider the former with a particular respect to the state of the Jewish Nation. And therein, 1. The greatness of their Judgment implied in those words *the Kingdom of God, &c.* 2. The particular reason of that Judgment, which was crucifying the Son of God.

1. The greatness of the Judgment which befel the Jewish Nation after imbruing their hands in the blood of Christ. And that will appear if we take *the Kingdom of God* in that double notion in which it was taken at that time. 1. It was taken by the Jews themselves for some peculiar and temporal blessings, which those who enjoyed it had above all other people. 2. It was taken by our Saviour for a clearer manifestation of the Will of God to the World, and the consequence of that in the hearts of good men; and all the spiritual blessings which do attend it. So that the taking away *the Kingdom of God* from them must needs be the heaviest judgment which could befall a people, since it implies in it, the taking away all the greatest temporal and spiritual blessings.

1. We take it in the notion the Jews themselves had of it; and in this sense we shall make it evident that *the Kingdom of God* hath been taken from that people in accomplishment of this prediction of our Saviour. For they imagined the *Kingdom of God* among them to consist in these things especially, *Deliverance from their enemies, a flourishing state, the upholding their Religion in Honour*, chiefly in the pompous worship of the Temple. Now if instead of these things, they were exposed to the fury of their enemies, so as never any nation besides them were, if their whole Polity was destroyed, so as the very face of Government hath ever since been taken from them, if their Religion hath been so far from being upheld, that the practice of it hath been rendred impossi-

ble



ble by the destruction of the Temple, and the consequences of it, then the Jews themselves cannot but say, that in their own sense *the Kingdom of God* hath been taken from them.

1. They make *the Kingdom of God* to consist in a deliverance of them from their enemies. For this was their great quarrel at our Saviour that he should pretend to bring the Kingdom of God among them, and do nothing in order to their deliverance from the Roman Power. They either were such great admirers of the Pomp and Splendor of the world, or so sensible of their own burdens and the Yoke that was upon them, that they could not be perswaded that God should design to send his Kingdom among them for any other end but their ease and liberty. They apprehended the Crown of Thorns which was put upon our Saviour's head was the fittest representation of the Nature of his Kingdom; for they looked upon it as the meer shew of a Kingdom, but the reality was nothing but affliction and tribulation; and this was a doctrine they thought of all others the least needful to be preached to them, who complained so much of what they underwent already: They took it for the greatest contradiction to talk of a Kingdom among them, as long as they were in subjection to the Roman Governours. But if Jesus of Nazareth had raised an army in defence of their liberty, and had destroyed the Romans, they would never have enquired farther concerning Prophecies, or Miracles, this had been instead of all others to them, and then they would willingly have given him that title, which was set up only in derision as the Elogium of his Cross, *Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews*: But we see how justly God dealt with them soon after, when they crucified the Son of God because he preached another Kingdom than they dreamed of, God suffers this very pretence of a temporal Kingdom to be the occasion of the ruine of the whole Nation. For upon that it was that they denied subjection to the Romans, for they were for no other Kingdom but only God's (*Θεὸν μόνον ἠγέτοσαν δεσπότην*, to acknowledge no other King but God, was the pretence of the War :) upon which arose that desperate Faction of the Zealots, who like so many Firebrands scattered up and down among them, soon put the whole Nation into Flames. And from this time there never was a more Tragical story either acted or written than that is of the miseries which this people underwent. For if ever there were the marks of divine vengeance seen in the ruine of a Nation, they were in that. For they were so far from hearkening to the counsel of their wisest men; that the first thing they made sure of, was the destruction of them. Wisdom was but another name for Treason among them: and there needed no other evidence to take away the lives of any, but to say that they were rich and wise. When they had thus secured themselves (as they thought) against the danger of too much Wisdom, by the removal of all such, who at least did not counterfeit madness and folly by joyning with them; then they began to suspect one another, and three Factions at once brake forth at *Hierusalem*, who seemed to be afraid the Romans should not destroy them fast enough, for in the several parts of the City where they were, they were continually killing one another: and never joyned together but when they saw the Romans approaching their Walls, lest they should take that work out of each others hands. By all means they were resolved to endure a Seige, and as a preparative for that, they burnt up almost all the stores of Provision which were among them: whence ensued a most dreadful famine, so great,

that it was thought reason enough to take away the life of a man, because he looked better than his Neighbours, they thereby suspecting he had some concealed provisions. They brake into the houses of such whom they imagined to be eating, and if they found them so, they either forced the meat out of their mouths, or choaked them with attempting to do it. It was no news then for a Woman to forget her sucking Child, so as not to have compassion upon the Son of her Womb: for the story is remarkable in \* *Josephus*, of a Mother that not only eat part of her Son, who sucked at her breast, but when the smell had tempted some to break in upon her and take part with her, and were struck with horror at the sight of it, *What, saith she, will you shew your selves more tender than a Woman, or more compassionate than a Mother!* It was no news to see Parents and Children destroying one another for a piece of bread, to see the streets and tops of houses covered with the Bodies of those who dropt down for want of food, insomuch that the stench of their carcases soon brought a Plague among them; which and the Famine ragged together with that violence, that when there was no possibility of burying their dead, they threw them over the Walls of the City, and *Titus* beholding the incredible numbers of them lift up his hands to Heaven and cryed, *ὡς ἐν τῷ τρέφον αὐτῶν, that it was none of his doing.* For he used all possible means to prevent the ruine of the City and Temple as well as the destruction of the People: but all to no purpose, for now the time of God's vengeance was come, yea the full time of his wrath was come. So that *Titus* often confessed, he never saw such an instance of divine vengeance upon a people, that when their enemies designed to save them, they were resolved to destroy themselves. And † *Philostratus* tells us, that when the Neighbour Provinces offered *Titus* a Crown, in token of his conquest of *Judæa*, he utterly refused it with this saying, *That he had nothing to do in the glory of that action, for he was only the instrument of God's vengeance upon the Jews.* Which we may easily believe, if we consider almost the incredible number of those who were destroyed at that time, 1100000 reckoned in that number in the eight months siege, and 90000 carried away captive, which might have been thought incredible, but for one circumstance which is mentioned by their own Historian, that at the time of the siege *Hiernsalem* was filled with Jews coming from all parts to the solemnity of the Passover, where they were shut up as in a Prison: and their Prison made their place of Execution. Yea so prodigious were the calamities which besel this people not only at *Hiernsalem*, but at *Casarea*, *Antioch*, *Scythopolis*, *Alexandria*, and almost all the Cities of *Syria*, that *Eliezer*, one of the heads of the Faction, when he saw they could not hold out against the Romans at *Massada*, perswaded them all to kill one another by this argument, || *That it was now apparent that God from the beginning of the War had designed their destruction, and they had better be the executioners of his vengeance themselves than suffer the Romans to be so.* Upon which they all miserably destroyed each other: who were the last that opposed the Roman Power.

\* Lib. 7.  
f. 28.

† *Philost.*  
*v. Apollon.*  
l. 6 cap. 14.

|| *Jos. p. 99c.*

What shall we say then to these things? Have we any ground to suspect the truth of the story as either made by Christians in hatred of the Jews, or improved mightily to their disadvantage? Not so certainly, when all their circumstances are related by Jewish and Roman Writers, who had no kindness at all for Christians. Or shall we say there was nothing extraordinary in all this, but that the Jews were a wild and seditious

seditious

ditionous people, that destroyed themselves and their Nation? but it is evident they were not always so; they had been a people that had flourished with the reputation of wisdom and conduct, and had great success against their enemies. And the Romans themselves at this time acknowledged they ne're saw a people of a more invincible spirit and less afraid of dying than these were. But all this turned to their great prejudice; and they who had been so famous in former ages for miraculous deliverances from the power of their enemies, were now not only given up into their hands, but into those which were far more cruel, which were their own. What then can we imagine should make so great an alteration in the State of their affairs now, but that God was their friend then and their enemy now? He gave them success beyond their Counsels, and without preparation; now he blasts all their designs, divides their counsels, and makes their contrivances end in their speedier ruine. Now they felt the effect of what God had threatened long before \* *Woe be unto you when I depart from you.* Now their strength, their wisdom, their peace, their honour, their safety were all departed from them. Whereby we see how much the welfare of a Nation depends upon God's Favour, and that no other security is comparable to that of true Religion. The Nation of the Jews, was for all that we know never more numerous than at this time, never more resolute and courageous to venture their lives, never better provided of fortified Towns and strong places of retreat and all provisions for War; but there was a hand-writing upon the Wall against them, *Mene, Tekel, Peres,* God had weigh'd them in the ballance and found them too light, he divides their Nation and removes his Kingdom from them and leaves them to an utter desolation. Neither can we say, *this was some present infatuation upon them,* for ever since all their attempt for recovering their own land, have but increased their miseries and made their condition worse than before. Witness that great attempt under *Barchocbas* in the time of *Adrian*, in which the Jews themselves say, there perished double the number of what came out of *Egypt*, i. e. above 1200000 men. After which they were not only wholly banished their land, but forbid so much as to look on the place where the Temple had stood, and were fain to purchase at a dear rate, the liberty of weeping over it; † *ut qui quondam emerant sanguinem Christi, emant lachrymas suas;* as † *Hierom.* *St. Hierom* speaks; i. e. that they who had bought the blood of Christ in *Zeph:* 1. were now fain to buy their own tears. It would be endless to pursue the miseries of this wretched people in all ages ever since; the slavery, disgrace, universal contempt, the frequent banishments, confiscations of estates, constant oppressions which they have laboured under. So that from that time to this, they have scarce had any Estates, but never any Country which they could call their own. So that *St. Augustin* hath truly said, || *the Curse of Cain is upon them,* for they are vagabonds in the earth, they have a mark upon them, so that they are not destroyed and yet are in continual fear of being so. God seems to preserve that miserable Nation in being, to be a constant warning to all others, to let them see what a difference in the same People the Favour or Displeasure of God can make, and how severe the Judgments of God are upon those who are obstinate and disobedient.

2. They make the Kingdom of God to consist in the flourishing of their State, or that *Polity* which God established among them. He was himself once their immediate Governour, and therefore it might be properly

ly called *his Kingdom*: and after they had Kings of their own their plenty and prosperity did so much depend on the kindness of Heaven to them, that all the days of their flourishing condition might be justly attributed to a more than ordinary providence that watched over them. For if we consider how small in comparison the extent and compass of the whole land of *Judea* was, being as *St. Hierom* saith, (who knew it well) but 160 miles in length from *Dan* to *Beersheba*, and 46 in breadth from *Joppa* to *Bethlehem*; if we consider likewise the vast number of its inhabitants, there being at \* *David's* numbring the people 1500000 fighting men, who ought not to be reckoned above a fourth part of the whole, and *Benjamin* and *Levi* not taken in; if we add to these, the many rocks, mountains and desarts in this small country, and that every seven years the most fertile places must lye fallow, we may justly wonder how all this number of people should prosper so much in so narrow a territory. For although we ought not to measure the rules of Eastern diet by those of our Northern Climates, and it be withal true, that the number of people add both to the riches and plenty of it, and that the fertile places of that land were so almost to a miracle, yet considering their scarcity of rain and their Sabbatical years, we must have recourse to an immediate care of Heaven which provided for all their necessities, and filled their stores to so great abundance that † *Solomon* gave to *King Hiram* every year 20000 measures of wheat, and twenty measures of oyl, every one of which contained about 30 bushels. And God himself had particularly promised to give them *the former and the latter rain*, and that they might have no occasion to complain of their Sabbatical years † *every sixth year should afford them fruit for three years*. By which we see their plenty depended not so much upon *the fat of their land*, as upon *the dew and blessing of heaven*. And if we farther consider them as environed about with enemies on every side, such as were numerous and powerful, implacable and subtle, it is a perpetual wonder (considering the constitution of the Jewish Nation) that they should not be destroyed by them. For all the males being obliged strictly by the Law to go up three times a year to *Hierusalem* (we should think against all rules of Policy to leave the Country naked) it seems incredible that their enemies should not over-run the Country, and destroy their Wives and Children at that time. But all their security was in the promise which God had made; \* *neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year*. And to let us see that obedience to God is the best security against the greatest dangers, we never read of any invasion of that Country in one of those times, nor of any miseries they suffer'd then; till the last and fatal destruction of *Hierusalem*, when God had taken away his Kingdom from them. And with that, their who Polity fell; for never since have they been able to maintain so much as the face of Government, living in subjection, if not in slavery in all parts of the World. So that whether we mean the succession of power in *Judah's* tribe, or the seat of power in the whole Nation, or the distinction and superiority of that tribe above the rest, by the *Scepter* which was not † *to depart from Judah till Shiloh came*; we are sure in every one of these senses, it is long since departed from it. For neither have any of the Posterity of *David* had any power over them, nor was it possible they should, considering that all Government is taken from them, and the very distinction of tribes is lost among them, they having never had any certain

Genealogies since the destruction of the Temple. I know what vain hopes, and foolish fancies, and incredible stories they have among them; of some supreme power, which they have in some part of the world but they know not where. Sometimes, they talk of their mighty numbers at *Bagdad*, and the officers of their own Nation which are set over them: but had they not so in *Egypt*, and were they ever the less in *Captivity* there? Sometimes they boast of their Schools in those Eastern parts, such as *Pombeditha*, *Sura*, and *Nebarda*, and the authority the *Rabbins* have over them; but this is just as the Orator said of *Dionysius* the Tyrant of *Syracuse*, that he loved Government so well, that when he was not suffered to govern Men there, he went to govern Boys at *Corinth*, \* *usque è imperio carere non poterat*. But these are tolerable in comparison with the incredible fictions of the four Tribes in the East, hem'd in by a vast and unpassable ridge of Mountains on every side, but when the famous Sabbatical River runs, which for six days bears all before it with a mighty torrent, and carries stones of such incredible bigness that there is no passing over it: but because the admirable nature of that River is † *That it keeps the Sabbath and rests all that day*, we might have thought it had been possible to have had some intercourse with them on that day; but to prevent this they tell us, *That as the water goes off, flames of fire come in the place of it and hinder all access to them*. But these are things which a man must be a Jew first before he can believe: and what will not they believe rather than Christ is the Son of God! For || *Manasse ben Israel* hath had the confidence in this age to say, *That the sand taken out of the Sabbatical River and preserved in a Tube doth constantly move for six days, and rests punctually from the beginning of the Sabbath to the end of it*. Which is the less to be wondred at since in all his Book of *the hope of Israel*, he eagerly contends for the incredible fiction of *Montezini* of the flourishing condition of the Jews at this day in some parts of *America*; but the *Salvo* is translated thither too, for there is a mighty River which hinders any from access to them. By all which we see how vain all their attempts are to preserve any reputation of that Power and Government wherein they made so great a part of the *Kingdom of God* among them to consist.

3. That which they thought gave them the greatest Title to the being God's peculiar people, was the *solemn worship of him at the Temple*. But what is become of all the glory of that now? Where are all the pompous Ceremonies, the numerous Sacrifices, the magnificent and solemn Feasts, which were to be constantly observed there? How is it then possible for them to observe the Religion now which God commanded them; since he likewise forbid the doing these things any where, but in the place which himself should appoint? So that they are under an unavoidable necessity of breaking their Law; if they do them not, they break the Law which commands them to be done; if they do them, they break the Law which forbids the doing them in any other place but at the Temple at *Hierusalem*. And this I am apt to think, was one of the greatest grounds among them, after the destruction of the Temple, of their setting up Traditions above the written Law; for finding it impossible to keep the written Law, if they could gain to themselves the Authority of interpreting it, they were not much concerned for the Law it self. And this is one of the strongest holds of their infidelity at this day. For otherwise we might in reason have thought, that their infidelity would have been buried in the ashes of their

\* Cic. Tusc. 3.

† Eldad. Danica apud Buxtorf. v. Sabbation. Praef. in Cos. P. Em. percur in Benjam. p. 206, 207. || Spes Israel. sect. 19. p. 65.

their Temple; when they had such plain predictions that the *Messias* was to come during the second Temple, that the prediction of Christ concerning the destruction of this Temple was so exactly fulfilled, that all attempts for the rebuilding of it were vain and fruitless. Of all which none promised so fair as that in *Julians* time, who out of spite to the Christians, and particularly with a design to contradict the Prophecy of our Saviour, gave all encouragement to the *Jews* to build it, he provided at his own charge all materials for it, and gave command to the Governour of the Province to take particular care in it; and the *Jews* with great joy and readiness set about it; but when they began to search the ground in order to the laying the Foundations, the earth round about trembles with a horrible earthquake, and the flames of a sudden break out, which not only consumed the undertakers but a great multitude of spectators, and the materials prepared for the building: Infomuch that an universal astonishment seized upon them, and the rest had rather leave their work, than be consumed by it. This we have delivered to us; not by persons at a great distance of time from it, but by such who lived in the same age: \* *ἡ τέταρτος μάρτυρες ἡμεῖς πάντες*, we are all witnesses (saith St. Chrysoft.) of the truth of these things, not by one or two, but the concurrent Testimony of the Writers of that age. Not only by † St. Chrysoft. but *Gregorius Nazianzenus*, *Ambrose Ruffinus*, *Socrates*, *Sozomen*, *Theodoret*. And lest all these should be suspected of partiality, because Christians, we desire no more to be believed concerning it, than what is recorded by *Ammianus Marcellinus* a Heathen Historian of that time, who was a Souldier under *Julian* in his last expedition, and he asserts the substance of what I have said before. And what a strange difference do we now find in the building of a third and a second Temple? in the former, though they met with many troubles and difficulties, yet God carried them through all and prospered their endeavours with great success. Now they had all humane encouragements and God only opposes them, and makes them desist with the loss of their workmen and materials, and perpetual dishonour to themselves, for attempting to fight against God in building him a Temple against his Will. From which we see that in all the senses the *Jews* understood the Kingdom of God, it was remarkably taken from them within so many years after Christ the true Passover was slain by them, as had passed from their first Passover after their going out of *Egypt* to their entrance into *Canaan*.

The Difficulty will be far less, and the concernment not so great as to the *Jews*, to prove that the Kingdom of God in the sense our Saviour meant it for the Power of the Gospel, was taken from them. For the event it self is a clear proof of it. Instead of that therefore I shall now prove that this taking away the Kingdom of God from them, was the effect of their sin in crucifying Christ. Therefore *Isay*, &c. To make this clear I shall proceed by these following steps.

1. That it is acknowledged by the *Jews* themselves that these great calamities have happened to them for some extraordinary sins. For to these they impute the destruction of the City and Temple, their oppressions and miseries ever since, and the deferring the coming of the *Messias*. For some of them have confessed || *That all the terms prefixed for the coming of the Messias are past long ago*, but that God provoked by their great sins hath thus long deferred his appearance, and suffered them in the mean while to lye under such great calamities.

2. The

\* Orat. 2.  
c. Jud.

† Chryf.  
in Mattk.  
hom. 4. in  
Act. hom.  
41. Nazi-  
an Orat. 2.  
in Julian.  
Amber. Ep.  
29. Theod.  
Impr. Ruf-  
fin. l. 1. c.  
38, 39. So-  
crat. l. 3.  
c. 20. So-  
zom. l. 5.  
c. 22. Theod.  
l. 3. c. 17.  
Amm. Mar-  
cell Hist. l.  
23. init.

|| Tit. San-  
hed. c. 11.  
sect. 31.

2. The sin ought to be looked on as so much greater by how much heavier and longer this punishment hath been, than any inflicted upon them before. For if God did in former captivities punish them for their sins, when they were brought back again into their own land after 70 years; we must conclude that this is a sin of a higher nature which hath not been expiated by 1600 years captivity and dispersion.

3. The Jews have not suffered these calamities for the same sins for which they suffered before. For then God charged them with Idolatry as the great provoking sin; and it is very observable that the Jews were never free from the suspicion of this sin than under the second Temple, and particularly near their destruction. They generally pretended a mighty zeal for their Law, and especially opposed the least tendency to Idolatry; insomuch that they would not suffer the *Roman* Ensigns to be advanced among them because of the Images that were upon them; and all the History of that time tells us of the frequent contests they had with the *Roman* Governours about these things: and ever since that time they have been perfect haters of *Idolatry*, and none of the least hindrances of their embracing Christianity hath been the infinite scandal which hath been given them by the *Roman Church* in that particular.

4. It must be some sin, which their Fathers committed and continues yet unrepented of by them to this day. Their Fathers committing it, was the meritorious cause of the first punishment; their Children not repenting of it, is the cause why that judgment lies still so heavy upon them. And now what sin can we imagine this to be, but putting to death the true *Messias*, which they will acknowledge themselves to be a sin that deserves all the miseries they have undergone; and it is apparent that in all this long captivity they never have had the heart to repent of the sin of crucifying Christ; other sins they confess and say they heartily repent of, but why then hath not God accepted of their repentance and brought them back into their own Land; according to the promises he long since made unto their Fathers? Which is a certain argument it is some sin, as yet unrepented of by them, which continues them under all their sufferings; and what can this be but that horrid sin of putting to death the Son of God, with that dreadful imprecation which to this day hath its force upon them, *His blood be upon us and our Children?* and this sin they are so far from repenting of, that they still justify their Fathers in what they did, and blaspheme Christ to this day in their prayers, where they think they may do it with safety. And to all this we may add that the ensuing calamities were exactly foretold by that Christ whom they crucified, and if no other argument would convince them that he was at least a Prophet, yet the punctual accomplishment of all his predictions ought to do it; as will appear by comparing \* *Matth.* 24. with the series of the story. And it is observable that the very place where our Saviour foretold these things, <sup>24. 3.</sup> *viz. the Mount of Olives*, was the first wherein the *Roman* Army encamped before *Hierusalem*. And as they had crucified the Son of God, and put the Lord of glory to open shame, mocking and deriding him in his sufferings; so when the *Romans* came to revenge his quarrel upon them, they took the captive Jews and crucified them openly in the view of the City, 500 oft-times in a day, *ἄλλον ἄλλω σχήματι πρὸς χλεῖνι, in different forms for sport sake*, as † *Josephus* tells us, who was then in the <sup>† Josephus. ἀλῶσ. l. 6. c. 12.</sup> *Roman* camp; and withall adds, their numbers were so great that there

was no room left for the crosses to stand, or wood enough to make crosses of. And they who had bought the blood of the Son of God for Thirty pieces of silver had this sin of theirs severely punished, when such multitudes of the Jews (2000 in one night) had their bowels ript up by the Roman Souldiers in hopes to have found the gold and silver there which they were supposed to have swallowed. And what greater argument can we have to believe that such judgments fell upon them upon the account of their sin in crucifying Christ, than that they were so punctually foretold so long before, and had all things so exactly answering in the accomplishment of them? For when Christ spake those things the Jews thought their destruction as incredible as that he was the *Messias*; but what greater evidence could there be to them that he was so, than that God did so severely avenge his blood upon them, and continues to do it for their unbelief and impenitency to this very day.

But it may be some will say, *What are all these things to us, we are none of those who crucified Christ or justifie the doing it; Thanks be to God, the Kingdom of God is not taken from us, but we enjoy what was taken from them?* To which I answer; If we really were what we pretend to be, these things are of great consequence to be considered by us.

I. For is it nothing to us to have so great an argument of the truth of our Religion, as the sufferings of the Jews to this day is for the sin of crucifying Christ? As often as we think of them we ought to consider the danger of infidelity, and the heavy judgments which that brings upon a people. We may take some estimate of the wrath of God against that sin, by the desolation of the Country, and the miseries of the inhabitants of it. When you think it a small sin to despise the Son of God, to revile his doctrine, and reproach his miracles, consider then what the Jews have suffered for these sins. As long as they continue a people in the World, they are the living monuments of the Vengeance of God upon an incorrigible and unbelieving Nation. And it may be one of the ends of God's dispersing them almost among all nations, that as often as they see and despise them, they may have a care of those sins which have made them a by-word and reproach among men, who were once a nation beloved of God and feared by men. See what it is to despise the offers of grace, to reproach and ill use the Messengers of it, who have no other errand but to perswade men to accept that Grace and bring forth the fruits thereof. See what it is for men to be slaves to their own lusts, which makes them not only neglect their own truest interest but that of their nation too. If that had not been the fundamental miscarriage of the Rulers of the Jewish Nation at the time of our Saviour, they would most readily have entertained him and saved their land from ruine. See what it is for a people to be high in conceit of themselves and to presume upon God's favour towards them. For there never was a nation more self-opinionated as to their wisdom, goodness, and interest with God than the Jews were when they began their war: and the confidence of this made them think it long till they had destroyed themselves. See what it is to be once engaged too far in a cause, how hard it is though they suffer never so much for it afterwards, for them to repent of it. We might have thought the Jews when they had seen the destruction of *Jerusalem* would have come off from their obstinacy; but how very few in comparison from that time to this, have sincerely repented of the sins of their Fore-fathers in the death



death of Christ. See how hard a matter it is to conquer the prejudices of education, and to condemn the most unjust actions of those when we come to understanding, whom from our infancy we had in veneration. For it is in great measure because they were their Ancestors, that the Jews to this day are so hardly convinced they could be guilty of so foul a sin as crucifying the *Messias*.

2. Is it nothing to us what they have suffered, who enjoy the greatest blessings we have, by their means, and upon the same terms which they did? For *to them at first were committed the Oracles of God*, we enjoy all the excellent and sacred records of ancient times from them, all the Prophecies of the men whom God raised up and inspired from time to time among them. By their means we converse with those great persons, *Moses, David, Solomon* and others, and understand their wisdom and piety by the writings which at this day we enjoy. By them we have conveyed to us, all the particular prophecies which relate to the *Messias*, which point out the Tribe, the place, the time, the very person he was to be born of. By their means we are able to confute their infidelity, and to confirm our own faith. Therefore we have some common concernment with them, and ought on that account to be sensible of their miseries. Is it nothing then to you that God hath dealt so severely with them, from whom you derive so great a part of your Religion? But if that be nothing, consider the terms upon which you enjoy these mercies you have; and they are as the latter clause of the Text assures us, *no other than the bringing forth the fruits thereof*. If we prove as obstinate and incorrigible as they, God may justly punish us, as he hath done them. It is but a *Vineyard* that God lets us, it is no *inheritance*; God expects our improvement and giving him the fruits of it, or else he may justly take it away from us and give it to other Husbandmen. Let us never flatter our selves in thinking it impossible God should make us as miserable and contemptible a people as he hath done the Jews; but we may be miserable enough and yet fall short of them. Have we any such promises of his favour as they had? how great were their privileges while they stood in favour with God above all other Nations in the World? \* But we see, though they were the first and the *natural branches*, *they are broken off by unbelief, and we stand by faith*.<sup>4, 5</sup> Nothing then can be more reasonable than the exhortation of the Apostle, † *be not high minded but fear*. Boast not of your present privileges; despise not those who are broken off, for consider, *If God spared not the natural branches, we ought to take heed, lest he also spare not us*.<sup>† Rom. 9: 11. 20. V. 21.</sup>

3. Is it nothing to us what the Jews suffer, since our sins are in some senses more aggravated than theirs were? For though there can be no just excuse made for their wilful blindness, yet there may be much less made for ours. For what they did against him was when he appeared in the weakness of humane flesh, in a very mean and low condition, before the great confirmation of our faith, by his resurrection from the dead: But our contempt of Christ is much more unpardonable, not only after that, but the miraculous consequences of it, and the spreading and continuance of his Doctrine in the World, after the multitudes of Martyrs and the glorious Triumphs of our Religion over all the attempts of the persecutors and betrayers of it; after the solemn Vows of our Baptism in his Name, and frequent addresses to God by him, and celebrating their memory of his death and passion. What can be more mean and ungrateful, what can

shew more folly and weakness than after all these to esteem the blood of Christ no otherwise than as of a common malefactor, or at least to live as if we so esteemed it? Nay, we may add to all this, after so severe an instance of God's vengeance already upon the Jews; which ought to increase our care, and will therefore aggravate our sin. What the Jews did they did as open and professed enemies, what we do we do as false and perfidious friends, and let any man judge which is the greater crime to assault an Enemy, or to betray a Friend.

4. Can this be nothing to us who have so many of those *Symptoms* upon us which were the fore-runners of their desolation? Not as tho' I came hither like the son of *Anani* in the Jewish story, who of a sudden, four years before the war, cryed out in the Temple, *a voice from the East, a voice from the West, a voice from the four Winds, Woe to Jerusalem, Woe to the Temple, Woe to all this People*; and this he continued crying, saith *Josephus*, *for seven years and five months, till at last being upon the Walls of the City, he cryed, Woe to myself also, and immediately a stone came out from one of the Roman Engines and dispatched him*. God forbid we should be so near a desolation as they were then; but yet our Symptoms are bad, and without our Repentance and Amendment God knows what they may end in. There were these following remarkable forerunners of desolation in the Jewish state, I am afraid we are too much concerned in.

1. A strange degeneracy of all sorts of men from the vertues of their Ancestors. This *Josephus* often mentions and complains of, and that there was no sort of men free; from the highest to the meanest, they had all degenerated not only from what they ought to be, but from what their Ancestors were. And there can be nothing which bodes worse to a people than this doth; for the decay of vertue is really the loss of strength and interest. And if this be not among us at this day in one sense, it must be in another, or else there would never be such general complaints of it as there are. It is hard to say that there hath ever been an Age, wherein vice, such as the very heathens abhorred, hath been more confident and daring than in this; wherein so many have not barely left vertue, but have bid defiance to it; and are ashamed of their Baptism for nothing so much as because therein they renounced the Devil and all his works; These are the *Zealots* in wickedness as the Jews were in faction. The flaming sword, the voice in the Temple, the terrible Earthquakes, were not greater Prodigies in nature among them, than men are in Morality among us, nor sadder prefaces of future miseries.

2. A general stupidity and inapprehensiveness of common danger: every one had a mighty zeal for his little party and faction he was engaged in, and would venture his life for that, never considering that by this means there was no more left to do for the *Romans*, but to stand by and see them destroy one another. I pray God that may be never said of the *Romans* in another sense concerning this Church of ours. We cannot but be sensible how much they are pleased at our divisions, and they have always hay and stubble enough, not only to build with, but thereby to add fuel to our flames. How happy should we be if we could once lay aside our petty animosities, and all mind the true interest of our Church and the security of the Protestant Religion by it, which ought to be dearer to us than our lives! But that is our misery, that our divisions in Religion have made us not more contemptible, than ridiculous

culous to foreign nations, and it puzzleth the wisest among our selves to find out expedients to keep us from ruining one of the best Churches of the Christian World.

3. An Atheistical contempt of Religion: for *Josephus* who was apt enough to flatter his Country-men tells us there never was *never a Deuotion*, \* L. 5. c. a more Atheistical Generation of men than at that time *the Leaders of*<sup>16.</sup> *the factions* were; for they contemned the Laws of Men and mocked at the Laws of God; † and derided the Prophetick Oracles as fabulous impostures: they would allow no difference of sacred and prophane, for † L. 5. c. they would drink the wine of the sacrifices promiscuously, and anoint 2. P. 887. their heads commonly with the sacred oyl; in a word they owned no distinction of good and evil, || but thought the greatest wickedness to be || P. 986. good to them. To say there is such a Generation of men among us, is to foretel our ruine more certainly than Comets and the most dreadful pre-fages do: For this is a sort of madness which seldom seizes upon a people, but when they are past cure, and therefore are near their end.

4. Spiritual pride. This was very remarkable in the people of the Jews in a time when they had as little reason for it, as any people in the world. They still looked on themselves as God's chosen and peculiar People, his Darlings and his delight, and thought that God's honour and interest in the world were mightily concerned in their preservation. If they should be destroyed, they could not imagine what God would do for a people to serve him; for all but themselves they looked on with a very scornful pity, and thought that God hated them because they did. They had the purity of his ordinances, in his house of prayer; and the society of the faithful among themselves: whereas all others they thought, served God only with their own Inventions, or placed their Religion in dull morality. They were the people who maintained his cause, and ventured their lives and estates for it, and therefore God was bound in faithfulness to defend them, and he must deny himself if he did destroy them. It seems strange to us, that a people rejected by God for their horrible Hypocrisie, should claim such an interest in him, when they were marked out for destruction by him; but such is the bewitching nature of Spiritual Pride and Hypocrisie, that it infatuates the minds of Men to their ruin; and flatters them with their interest in the Promises, till God makes good his threatnings and destroys them. Never any people thought they had a richer stock of promises to live on, than they; *ancient promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, full promises*, of favour, protection, and deliverance from enemies; *particular promises* made to them and to no other people in the world. Besides these, they had mighty *experiences* of God's kindness towards them, *undoubted experiences*, not depending on the deceitful workings of fancy; but seen in very strange and wonderful deliverances; *frequent experiences*, throughout the whole History of their Nation: and *peculiar experiences* being such vouchsafements to them, which God communicated to none but his chosen people. Add to these, that they had at this time a wonderful zeal for the true worship of God as they thought; they regarded no persecution or opposition, but thought it their glory and honour to sacrifice themselves for the cause of God and his people. And yet all this while, God was the greatest enemy they had; and all their pretences signified nothing to him who saw their unsufferable pride and loathsome hypocrisie through those thin veils they had drawn over them, to deceive the less observing sort of Men by. Other sins that

that are open and publick God preserves the Authority of his Laws by punishing of them, but these spiritual sins of pride and hypocrisie, he not only vindicates his Authority over the consciences of Men, but the infiniteness of his wisdom and knowledge in their discovery, and his love to integrity and inward holiness in the punishment of them. And therefore these sins are more especially odious to God as incroaching upon his highest and most peculiar attributes; thence he is said *to resist the Proud*, as though he made an attempt upon God himself; and he loaths the Hypocrite in heart, as one that mocks God as well as deceives Men. The first tendency to the destruction of this Nation of the Jews was the prevalency of the Pharisaical temper among them, which was a compound of Pride and Hypocrisie; and when the field was over-run with these tares, it was then time for God to put in his sickle and cut them down. God forbid, that our Church and the Protestant Religion in it should be in danger of destruction, for that would be a judgment beyond fire and sword and plague, and any thing we have yet smarted by; that would be the taking away *the Kingdom of God from us*, and setting up the *Kingdom of darkness*; that would be not only a punishment to our own Age, but the heaviest curse next to renouncing Christianity we could entail upon Posterity. But however tho' God in mercy may design better things for us, we cannot be sufficiently apprehensive of our danger, not so much from the business of our enemies, as those bad Symptoms we find among our selves. When there is such monstrous pride and ingratitude among many who pretend to a purer worship of God than is established by Law, as though there were little or no difference between the Government of *Moses and Aaron*, and the bondage of *Egypt*. O *England, England*, what will the pride and unthankfulness of those who profess Religion bring thee to! Will Men still prefer their own reputation, or the interest of a small party of Zealots, before the common concerns of our Faith and Religion? O *that we did know, at least in this our day, the things that belong to our peace!* but let it never be said, *That they are hid from our eyes*. But if our common enemy should enter in at the breaches we have made among our selves, then Men may wish they had sooner known the difference between the reasonable commands of our own Church, and the intolerable Tyranny of a foreign and usurped power: between the soft and gentle hands of a Mother, and the Iron sinews of an Executioner; between the utmost rigour of our Laws, and the least of an Inquisition. If ingratitude were all, yet that were a sin high enough to provoke God to make our condition worse than it is, but to what a strange height of spiritual Pride are those arrived, who ingross all true godliness to themselves? as though it were not possible among us to go to Heaven and to Church together. As though Christ had no Church for 1500 years and more, wherein not one person can be named who thought it unlawful to pray by a prescribed form. As though Men could not love God and pray sincerely to him, that valued the Peace and Order of the Church above the heats and conceptions of their own brains. Where differences proceed meerly from ignorance and weakness, they are less dangerous to themselves or others: But where there is so much impatience of reproof, such contempt of superiours, such uncharitable censures of other Men, such invincible prejudices and stiffness of humour, such scorn and reproach cast upon the publick worship among us; what can such things spring from but a root of bitterness and spiritual pride?

I speak

I speak not these things to widen our differences, or increase our animosities, they are too large and too great already, nor to condemn any humble and modest dissenters from us, but I despair ever to see our divisions healed, till Religion be brought from the fancies to the hearts of Men; and till Men instead of mystical notions and unaccountable experiences, instead of misapplying promises and misunderstanding the spirit of prayer, instead of judging of themselves by mistaken signs of Grace, set themselves to the practice of humility, self-denial, meekness, patience, charity, obedience and a holy life, and look on these as the greatest duties and most distinguishing characters of true Christianity. And in doing of these there shall not only be a great reward in the life to come; but in spite of all opposition from Atheism, Profaneness, or Superstition, we may see our divisions cured, and the Kingdom of God, which is a Kingdom of peace and holiness, to abide and flourish among us.

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S. E. R.

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# SERMON IX.

Preached at

## WHITE-HALL, WHITSUNDAY 1669.

JOHN VII. 39.

*But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*

**W**Hat was said of old concerning the first Creation of the World, that in order to the accomplishment of it \* *the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*, is in a sense agreeable to the nature of it as true of the renovation of the World by the Doctrine of Christ. For whether by that we understand a great and vehement wind, as the Jews generally do, or rather the Divine power manifesting it self in giving motion to the otherwise dull and unactive parts of matter; we have it fully represented to us in the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost: For that came upon them, † *as a rushing mighty Wind*, and inspired them with a new life and motion, whereby they became the most active instruments of bringing the World out of that state of confusion and darkness it lay in before, by causing the glorious light of the Gospel to shine upon it. And lest any part should be wanting to make up the parallel, in the verse before the text, we read of the *Waters* too which the Spirit of God did move upon, and therefore called not a dark Abyss, but flowing rivers of living water. || *He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*: Not as though the Apostles like some in the ancient Fables were to be turned into Fountains and pleasant Springs; but the great and constant benefit which the Church of God enjoys by the plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit upon them, could not be better set forth than by rivers of living water flowing from them. And this the Evangelist in these words, to prevent all cavils and mistakes, tells us was our Saviour's meaning; *But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive*. And lest any should think that our Blessed Saviour purposely affected to speak in strange metaphors, we shall find a very just occasion given him

\* Gen. 1.2.

† Act. 2.2.

|| V. 38.

him for using this way of expression from a custom practised among the Jews at that time. For in the solemnity of the Feast of Tabernacles, especially in the last and great day of the Feast mentioned, *v. 37*, after the Sacrifices were offered upon the Altar, one of the Priests was to go with a large Golden Tankard to the Fountain of *Siloam*, and having filled it with water, he brings it up to the water-gate over against the Altar, where it was received with a great deal of pomp and ceremony, with the sounding of the Trumpets and rejoicing of the People, which continued during the libation or pouring it out before the Altar; after which followed the highest expressions of joy that were ever used among that people; insomuch that they have a saying among them, *That he that never saw the rejoicing of the drawing of water, never saw rejoicing in all his life.* Of which several accounts are given by the Jews, some say it had a respect to the latter rain which God gave them about this time, to the others keeping of the Law; but that which is most to our purpose is, that the reason assigned by one of the Rabbies in the *Jerusalem* \* Talmud is, † *because of the drawing or pouring out of the Holy Ghost according to what is said, with joy shall ye draw water out of the Wells of Salvation.* By which we see that no fairer advantage could be given to our Saviour to discourse concerning the effusion of the Holy Ghost, and the mighty joy which should be in the Christian Church by reason of that, than in the time of this solemnity; and so lets them know that the Holy Ghost represented by their pouring out of water was not to be expected by their rites and ceremonies, but by believing the Doctrine which he preached: and that this should not be in so scant and narrow a measure as that which was taken out of *Siloam*, which was soon poured out and carried away, but out of them on whom the Holy Ghost should come, *rivers of living waters should flow*; whose effect and benefit should never cease as long as the World it self should continue. So that in the words of the Text we have these particulars offered to our consideration.

1. The effusion of the Spirit under the times of the Gospel: *But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.*

2. The nature of that effusion represented to us by *rivers of living waters flowing out of them.*

3. The time that was reserved for it; which was after the glorious ascension of Christ to Heaven: *For the holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*

1. The effusion of the Spirit under the times of the Gospel; by which we mean those extraordinary gifts and abilities which the Apostles had after the Holy Ghost is said to descend upon them. Which are therefore called || *signs and wonders, and divers gifts of the Holy Ghost*: \* and † *the operations of the Spirit*; of which we have a large enumeration given us in that place.

The two most remarkable which I shall insist upon and do comprehend under them most of the rest, are, *the power of working Miracles*, whether in Healing diseases or any other way; and *the gift of tongues*; either in speaking or interpreting; they who will acknowledge that the Apostles had these, will not have reason to question any of the rest. And concerning these I shall endeavour to prove,

1. That the things attributed to the Apostles concerning them, could not arise from any ordinary, or natural causes.

L' Empe-  
reur in  
Middoth.  
p. 67.  
Buxtorf.  
Lex. Rabb.  
v. 287  
Hackspan-  
dis. Philo-  
log. p. 488.  
Tremel. in  
not. ad Syr.  
N.

\* v. Bux-  
torf.  
† Esai. 12.

|| Heb. 2. 4.  
\* 1 Cor.  
12. 6. 11.

2. That they could not be the effects of an evil, but of a holy and divine spirit; and therefore that there was really such a pouring out of the spirit as is here mentioned.

1. That the things attributed to the Apostles could not arise from any merely natural causes. It is not my present business to prove the truth of the matters of fact, *viz.* that the Apostles did those things which were accounted Miracles by those who saw them or heard of them; and that on the day of Pentecost they did speak with strange tongues; for these things are so universally attested by the most competent witnesses, *viz.* persons of the same age, whose testimony we can have no reason to suspect; and not only by those who were the friends to this Religion, but the greatest enemies Jews and Heathens; and by all the utmost endeavours of Atheistical men, who have not set themselves to disprove the testimony, but the consequence of it, (by saying that granting them true they do not infer the concurrence of a divine spirit) that on the same grounds any person would question the truth of these things, he must question the truth of some other things, which himself believes on the same or weaker grounds than these are. Supposing then the matters of fact to be true, we now enquire whether these things might proceed from any merely natural causes, which will be the best done by examining the most plausible accounts which are pretended to be given of them. And thus some have had the confidence to say, *That whatever is said to be done by the power of miracles in the Apostles might be effected by a natural temperament of body, or the great power of imagination; and that their speaking with strange tongues might be the effect only of a natural Enthusiasm, or some distemper of brain.*

1. That the power of miracles might be nothing but a natural temperament or the strength of imagination.

1. An excellent natural temper of body they say may do strange and wonderful things, so that such a one who hath an exact temperament may walk upon the waters, stand in the air, and quench the violence of the fire; and by a strange kind of sanative contagion may communicate healthful spirits, as persons that are infected do noisom and pestilential. These are things spoken with as much care and as little reason, as any of the calumnies against Religion, which are so boldly uttered by men who dare speak any thing as to these things but reason, and do any thing but what is good.

But can these men after all their confidence produce any one person in the World, who by the exquisiteness of his natural temper hath ever walked upon the waters, or poised himself in the air, or kept himself from being singed in the fire? If these things be natural, how comes it to pass that no other instances can be given but such as we urge for miraculous? We say indeed that \* *Christ walked on the Sea*, but withal we say this was an argument of that divine power in him, *which, as Job saith, † alone spreadeth out the Heavens and treadeth upon the waves of the Sea*: We say that || *Elijah was carried up into Heaven by a Chariot of fire and a whirlwind*; but it was only by his power, \* *who maketh the winds his Messengers, and flames of fire his Ministers*, as some render those words of the Psalmist: We say that the three Children were preserved † *in the fiery furnace, that they had no hurt*; and even *Nebuchadnezzar* was hereby convinced; that he was the *true God*, which was able to preserve his servants from the force of that devouring element which was therefore so much worshipped by those Eastern people, because it destroyed

\* Matth.

14. 29.

† Job 9. 8.

|| 2 Kings

2. 11.

\* Psal.

104. 4.

† Dan. 5.

25, 26.



destroyed not only the men but the gods of other nations. But is this enough to satisfy any reasonable men that these things were done by natural causes; because they were done at all? For that is to suppose it impossible there should be miracles; which is to say it is impossible there should be a God; which is an attempt somewhat beyond what the most impudent Atheists pretended. But in this case nothing can be reasonably urged but *common experience* to the contrary; if these were things which were usually done by other causes there would be no reason to pretend a miraculous power: but we say it is impossible that such things should be produced by meer natural causes, and in this case there can be no confutation but by contrary experience. As we see the opinion of the Ancients concerning the uninhabitableness of the torrid Zone, and that there were no Antipodes, are disproved by the manifest experience to the contrary of all modern discoverers. Let such plain experience be produced, and we shall then yield the possibility of the things by some natural causes, although not by such *an exact temperament of body*, which is only an instance of the strong power of imagination in those who think so whatever that may have on others. Such a temperament of body as these persons imagine, considering the great inequality of the mixture of the earthly and aerial parts in us, being it may be as *great a miracle* it self, as any they would disprove by it.

2. But supposing such a temperament of body to be possible, how comes it to be so beneficial to others, as to propagate its vertue to the cure of diseased persons? We may as well think that a great beauty may change a Black by often viewing him, or a skilful Musician make another so by sitting near him, as one man heal another because he is healthful himself. Unless we can suppose it in the power of a man to send forth the best spirits of his own body and transfuse them into the body of another; but by this means that which must cure another must destroy himself. Besides the healthfulness of a person lies much in the freedom of perspiration of all the noxious vapours to the body; by which it will appear incredible that a man should preserve his own health by sending out the worst vapours, and at the same time cure another, by sending out the best.

3. Supposing we should grant that a vigorous heat and a strong arm may by a violent friction disperse some tumor of a distempered body; yet what would all this signify to the mighty cures which were wrought so easily and with a word speaking, and at such great distance as were by Christ and his Apostles? Supposing our Saviour had the most exact natural temper that ever any person in the world had; yet what could this do to the cure of a person above twenty miles distance? for so our Saviour cured the Son of a Nobleman who lay sick at *Capernaum*, when himself was at \* *Cana in Galilee*? So at † *Capernaum* he cured the Cen-

\* Joh. 4.  
45, 53.  
† Matth.  
8. 6, 13.  
|| Acts 5.  
15. 19. 12.

turion's servant at his own house without going thither. Thus we find the Apostles curing, though || *they did not touch them*; and that not one or two but multitudes of diseased persons. And nothing can be more absurd than to imagine that so many men should at the same time work so many miraculous cures by vertue of a temperament peculiar to themselves? for how come they only to happen to have this temperament and none of the Jews who had all equal advantages with them for it? Why did none of the enemies of Christ do as strange things as they did? How come they never to do it before they were *Christians*, nor in such an extraordinary manner till after the day of Pentecost?

Did the being Christians alter their natural temper and infuse a *savage* vertue into them which they never had before? Or rather was not their Christianity like to have spoiled it if ever they had it before; by their frequent watchings, fastings, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, stripes and imprisonments, racks and torments? Are these the improvers of an excellent constitution? if they be I doubt not but those who magnifie it in them, would rather want the vertue of it, than be at the pains to obtain it.

2. But what a natural temper cannot do, they think *the power of imagination* may: and therefore in order to the enervating the power of miracles, they mightily advance that of imagination: which is the *Idol* of those who are as little Friends to Reason in it as they are to Religion. Any thing shall be able to effect that, which they will not allow God to do: nay, the most extravagant thing which belongs to humane nature shall have a greater power than the most holy and divine spirit. *But do not we see, say they, strange effects of the power of imagination upon mankind?* I grant we do, and in nothing more than when men set it up against the power of God: yet surely we see far greater effects of that in the World than we do of the other. The power of imagination can never be supposed to give a being to the things we see in the World? but we have the greatest reason to attribute that to a divine and infinite power; and is it not far more rational that that which gave a Being to the course of nature should alter it when it pleaseth, than that which had nothing to do in the making of it? So that in general, there can be no competition between the power of God and the strength of imagination, as to any extraordinary effects which happen in the World. But this is not all; for there is a repugnancy in the very nature of the thing that the power of imagination should do all those miracles which were wrought by Christ or his Apostles. For either they must be wrought by the imagination of the Agent or of the Patient: if of the Agent, then there can be no more necessary to do the same things than to have the same strength of imagination which they had; what is the reason then that never since or before that time were so many signs and wonders wrought as there were then by the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord? If *Peter* and *John* cured the lame man by the strength of imagination; why have no persons ever since cured those whose welfare they have as heartily desired as ever they could do his? Certainly if imagination could kill mens enemies, there would never need *Duels* to destroy them, nor Authority to punish such as do it: and if it could cure Friends, there would need no Physicians to heal and recover them, and death would have nothing to do, but with persons that were wholly Friendless. If they say, *that persons are not sufficiently perswaded of their own power, and therefore they do see little good*; let any of those who contend the most for it attempt the cure when they please of any the most common infirmity of mankind; and if they cannot do that, let them then perswade us they can do miracles by that, which they cannot cure the tooth-ach by. But here they will say, *the imagination of the Patient is necessary in order to a miracle being wrought upon him*; not such I am sure as Christ and his Apostles wrought, who not only healed the lame and the blind, but *raised the dead*; and what power of imagination do they suppose in *Lazarus* when he had lain four days in the Grave? and however they think of the soul they must in this case allow this power of imagination to be *immortal*. So that were there no other arguments

ments but that of raising the dead that demonstrates it impossible that what Christ or his Apostles did, did depend on the strength of Fancy in those on whom they wrought their miracles.

Object. *But, say they, did not Christ and his Apostles require believing first in all persons that had miracles wrought upon them; and why should this be, but because the strength of imagination was required to it? And is it not expressly said that Christ could not do any mighty works among his own Country-men because of their unbelief? by which it appears that the efficacy of his miracles did depend on the Faith of the Persons. To which I answer,*

*Ans. 1.* That Christ did not always require faith in the person on whom he wrought his miracles; for then it had been impossible he should ever have raised any from the dead? which we are sure he did. And did not \* *St. Paul* raise *Eutychius* from the dead? and can any think so \* *Act. 10.*  
9, 12.  
absurdly as that faith was required from a dead man in order to his resurrection? so that the greatest miracles of all others were wrought, where there was no possibility of believing in those on whom they were wrought.

2. When in miraculous cures believing was required, it was to shew for what end those miracles were wrought, *viz.* to confirm the Doctrine of the Gospel by them: they did not work miracles to be admired by the people as *Simon Magus* would have done; the Apostles had no such intolerable vanity to be cried up for Gods, though they did such great things; not like that *Cæsar* of the *Atheists* as some call him, who concludes one of his † *Dialogues* with that horrible piece of vanity (to say no more of it) *aut Deus es aut Vaninus*; and *Pomponatius* his Master before him had said || *Philosophi sunt Dii terrestres*, (and you must be sure to reckon him in the number;) but how was it possible for these men to discover more their mean thoughts of a Deity than by making him to be as despicable as themselves? What boasting and ostentation would these Men have made of themselves, if they could have done but the thousand part of what the Apostles did? But they were Men did as far excel all such in all true vertue and real excellency as they did in that miraculous power which God had given them. If they required Men to believe whom they cured, it was that they might cure both body and soul together: but sometimes they cured persons whom they saw not: as the \* *handkerchiefs* from *St. Paul* at *Ephesus* cured the diseased when they were carried to them. But generally they took all opportunities to convey the Doctrine of Christianity into the minds of those, out of whose bodies they cast either Diseases or Devils. *But is it not said that Christ could do no mighty works among them because of their unbelief, and the Power of his disciples could not be greater than his own?* To which I answer,

1. It is no where said in the Scripture that Christ could do no miracles at all among them because of their unbelief: for in one place it is said, † *And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.* † *Mark*  
13. 53.  
He did miracles enough to convince them, but when he saw their obstinacy he would not cast away any more upon them. And in that other place where it is said, || *that he could there do no mighty work,* it is || *Matth.*  
6. 5.  
presently added, *save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk and healed them.* And what absurdity is there that Christ should do no extraordinary miracle among them, among whom he saw that himself and his miracles were both equally contemn'd. It is not the method of divine  
goodness

† *Dialog.*  
54. de *De-*  
*moniaccis.*  
|| *Pompon-*  
*nat. de*  
*Incantat.*  
c. 4. p. 53.

\* *Acts 19.*  
11, 12.

goodness to bestow the largest kindneses at first; those who improve the beginnings of favour shall have more, but those who despise the first may justly be rejected from any farther kindness.

2. When it is said *that he could not*, that expression doth not imply any impossibility in the thing but a deliberate resolution to the contrary, so it is used Acts 4. 20. *For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.* Who questions but there was a possibility in the thing, that they might have held their peace? but it was a thing which upon great deliberation they had resolved not to do. So \* *thou canst not bear them which are evil*; and † *we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.* From which it appears that this can be no prejudice to the power of Christ in working miracles, but only shews his just resolution not to do it, considering the contempt wherewith he had been entertained among them.

3. It is pretended by those men who set themselves to undervalue those miraculous gifts which the Apostles had, *that the gift of tongues might be only the effect of an Enthusiastick heat, or some distemper of their brains, as men in a high Fever are apt to speak such things and words, which while they are in health they could never do.* But that such unreasonable imaginations do more argue a distempered brain, than any thing we assert concerning these divine persons will easily appear from these considerations.

1. That no violent heat whatsoever can form a new language to a man which he never knew before. If language had been natural to man, there might have been some reason for it; but that we all know to be an arbitrary thing: and as well might a blind man paint with an exact difference of Colours, or one write plainly who could never read, as any person by the meer heat of his Phancy speak suddenly in a tongue which he never learnt. There have been some who have said || *that the mind of man hath naturally all kinds of languages within it self, and it wants nothing but some mighty heat to stir men up to speak in any kind of them.* But we are to take notice that those things are accounted *wit* when spoken against Religion, which would have been *nonsense* and *contradictions* if spoken for it. And certainly nothing could be more absurdly said, than for the same men to make all the imaginations we have of things to come in by our senses, and yet to say that the mind of man can have those things in it, which he never learnt or heard. If this supposition were true we might invert that saying of \* *Festus* to St. Paul, *Much learning hath made thee mad*; for then *madness*, or that which is the next to it, *a great heat of brain*, would make men the most *learned*. If this were true, there would be a much easier way of attaining to speak in the languages of all nations than that which many take to gain a very few of them: for the heightening of Phancy either by Wine, or a degree of madness would inspire men with skill in tongues to a miracle.

2. But supposing such a thing possible, which is far from being so, yet it is very remote from our present case; for the Apostles made it manifest to all persons that they were far enough from being inspired with the vapours of wine, or touched with any Enthusiastick madness. They spake with strange tongues, but in such a manner as convinced great numbers of their hearers of the excellency of that doctrine, which was delivered by them. As St. Paul answered *Festus*, † *I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness*; so they did

\* Revel.  
2. 2.  
† 2 Cor.  
13. 8.

|| *Vanin.*  
*Dial* 54.  
p. 407.

\* Act. 2.  
24.

† Act. 26.  
25.

did not speak incoherent and insignificant words which madness makes men do, nor any mean and trivial things, merely for ostentation of their gifts, but they spake though with divers tongues, \* *the great or* <sup>\* Act. 2. 11.</sup> *wonderful things of God*: So their Auditors confessed with admiration. These are not the effects of Wine or Madness, as St. Peter at large proves, against the unreasonable cavils of some, † *who mocked and said they were* <sup>† V. 12. V. 41.</sup> *full of new wine*. Which he doth with so great success, that the same day 3000 persons disowned their former course of life and embraced Christianity. Surely madness was never more infectious, never made men more wise and sober than this did, if the Apostles were acted only by that. When was there ever better and more weighty sense spoken by any, than by the Apostles after the day of *Pentecost*? With what reason do they argue, with what strength do they discourse, with what a sedate and manly courage do they withstand the opposition of the *Sanhedrin* against them? they never fly out into any extravagant passion, never betray any weakness or fear; but speak the Truth with boldness, and rejoyce when they suffer for it. It could be no sudden heat which acted them on the day of *Pentecost*, for the same Spirit and power continued with them afterwards: they lived and acted by vertue of it, so that their life was as great a miracle, as any that was wrought by them. Their zeal was great but regular, their devotion fervent and constant, their conversation honest and prudent, their discourses inflaming and convincing, and the whole course of their lives breathed nothing but glory to God, and good-will towards Men. If they are called to suffer for their Religion, with what constancy do they own the truth, with what submission do they yield to their persecutors, with what meekness and patience do they bear their sufferings! If differences arise among Christians, with what care do they advise, with what caution do they direct, with what gentleness do they instruct, with what tenderness do they bear with dissenters, with what earnestness do they endeavour to preserve the peace of the Christian Church! When they are to plant Churches, how ready to go about it, how diligent in attending it, how watchful to prevent all miscarriages among them! When they write Epistles to those already planted, with what Authority do they teach, with what Majesty do they command, with what severity do they rebuke, with what pity do they chastise, with what vehemency do they exhort, and with what weighty arguments do they persuade all Christians to adorn the Doctrine of God their Saviour in all things! So that such persons who after all these things can believe that the Apostles were acted only by some extravagant heats, may as easily persuade themselves that men may be drunk with sobriety, and mad with reason, and debauched with goodness. But such are fit only to be treated in a dark room; if any can be found darker than their understandings are.

2. But yet there may be imagined a higher sort of madness than these men are guilty of, *viz.* That when men are convinced that these things could not be done by meer Mechanical causes, then they attribute them to the assistance of Spirits, but not to the holy and divine, but such as are evil and impure. A madness so great and extravagant, that we could hardly imagine that it were incident to humane nature, unless the Scripture had told us that some had thus blasphemed the son of man, and either had or were in danger of blaspheming the *Holy Ghost* too. And this is properly *blaspheming the Holy Ghost*, (which was  
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not given, as our text tells us, till after Christ's ascension) when men attribute all those miraculous gifts which were poured out upon the Apostles in confirmation of the Christian doctrine to the power of an unclean Spirit. For so the Evangelist St. Luke, when he mentions the  
 \* Luk. 12. \* *blasphemy against the Holy Ghost which shall not be forgiven*, immediately  
 10. subjoyns, *their bringing in the Apostles to the Synagogues and Magistrates and Powers*; and adds, *that the Holy Ghost, (even that which they so blasphemed in them) should teach them in that same hour what they ought to say*. I deny not but the attributing the miraculous works of Christ, who had the Holy Spirit without measure, to an evil Spirit, was the same kind of sin; but it received a greater aggravation after the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles. For now the great confirmation was given to the truth of all that Christ had said before; he had sometimes concealed his miracles and forbid the publishing of them: and to such  
 † 1 Cor. he appeared but as the son of man, of whom it is said † *that had they*  
 2. 8. *known him they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory*: and St. Peter more expressly; || *and now Brethren I wot that through ignorance you did it as did also your Rulers*. But now since his resurrection and ascension, when God by the effusion of the Holy Ghost hath given the largest and fullest Testimony to the Doctrine of the Gospel; if men after all this shall go on to *blaspheme the Holy Ghost*, by attributing all these miracles to a Diabolical power, then there is no forgiveness to be expected either in this world, or the world to come; because this argues the greatest obstinacy of mind, the highest contempt of God, and the greatest affront that can be put upon the Testimony of the Holy Spirit; for it is charging the Spirit of truth to be an evil and a lying Spirit. By which we see what great weight and moment the Scripture lays upon this pouring out of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles, and what care men ought to have how they undervalue and despise it, and much more how they do reproach and blaspheme it. They might as well imagine that light and darkness may meet and embrace each other, as that the infernal Spirits should imploy their power in promoting a doctrine so contrary to their interest? For Heaven and Hell cannot be more distant, than the whole design of Christianity is from all the contrivances of wicked Spirits. How soon was the Devil's Kingdom broken, his Temples demolished, his Oracles silenced, himself baffled in his great design of deceiving mankind when Christianity prevailed in the World? Having thus far asserted the truth of the thing, *viz.* that there was such an effusion of the Holy Spirit, we now come to consider,

2. The nature of it as it is represented to us by *Rivers of living waters flowing out of them that believe*: by which we may understand,

1. The plenty of it, called *Rivers of waters*.
2. The benefit and usefulness of it to the Church.

1. The plentifulness of this effusion of the Spirit; there had been some drops, as it were, of this Spirit which had fallen upon some of the Jewish nation before; but those were no more to be compared with these *Rivers of Waters*, than the waters of *Siloam* which run softly, with the mighty River *Euphrates*. What was the Spirit which *Bezaleel* had to build the \* *Tabernacle* with, if compared with that Spirit which the Apostles were inspired with for *building* up the Church of God? What was that † *Spirit of Wisdom* which some were filled  
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\* Exod.  
31. 3.

† Exod.  
28. 3.

with to make garments for *Aaron*, if compared with that Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation which led the Apostles into the knowledge of all Truth? What was that *Spirit of Courage* which was given to the *Judges* of old, if compared with that *Spirit* which did *convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment*? What was that *Spirit of Moses* which was communicated to the 70 Elders, if compared with that Spirit of his Son, which God hath shed abroad in the hearts of his people? What was that *Spirit of Prophecie*, which inspired some *Prophets* in several Ages, with that \* *pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh*; which \* *Act. 2,* the Apostle tells us was accomplished on the day of *Pentecost*? But these *Rivers of Waters*, though they began their course at *Jerusalem* upon that day, yet they soon overflowed the Christian Church in other parts of the World. The sound of that rushing mighty Wind was soon heard in the most distant places: and the fiery tongues inflamed the hearts of many who never saw them. These gifts being propagated into other Churches, and many other tongues were kindled from them, as we see how much this gift of tongues obtained in the Church of *Corinth*: And so in the History of the Acts of the Apostles, we find after this day how the Holy Ghost fell upon them which believed, and what mighty signs and wonders were done by them.

2. The benefit and usefulness of this effusion of the Spirit; like *the Rivers of Waters* that both refresh and enrich, and thereby make glad the City of God. The coming down of the Spirit was like † *the* † *Isa. 44,* *pouring water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground*: 3.  
 Now, || *God opened the Rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst* || *Isa. 41,* *of the valleys: that the poor and needy who seek water might be refreshed,* 18.  
*and they whose tongues failed for Thirst might satisfy themselves with living water.* These are some of the lofty expressions whereby the *Courtlly Prophet Isaiab* sets forth the great promise of the spirit; none better befitting the mighty advantages the Church of God hath ever since enjoyed by the pouring out of the spirit than these. For the fountain was opened in the Apostles, but the streams of those Rivers of living water have run down to our Age: not confined within the banks of *Tiber*, nor mixing with the impure waters of it; but preserved pure and unmixed in that sacred doctrine contained in the Holy Scripture. Within those bounds we confine our faith, and are not moved by the vain discourses of any who pretend to discover a new Fountain-head to these waters at *Rome*, and would make it impossible for them to come down to us through any other Channel but theirs. But supposing they had come to us through them, have they thereby gotten the sole disposal of them, that none shall taste but what and how much they please? and must we needs drink down the filth and mud of their Channel too? As long as they suffer us to do what Christ hath commanded us to do, *viz.* \* to take of these \* *John 7,* waters of life freely we do our own duty and quarrel not with them. 37.  
 But if they go about to stop the passage of them, or adulterate them *Revel. 22,* with some forrain mixture, or strive with us as the Herdsmen of *Gerar* 17.  
 did with *Isaac's* Herdsmen saying the † *Water is ours*, then if the name of the Well be *Esek*, if contentions do arise, the blame is not † *Gen.* ours; we assert but our own just right against all their encroachments. 26. 20.  
 For as *Isaac* pleaded || *that he only digged again the wells of water which* || *V. 18.* *they had digged in the days of Abraham his Father*; and although the *Philistins* had stopped them after the death of *Abraham*, yet that could  
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be no hindrance to his right, but he might open them again, and call their names after the names by which his Father had called them: So that is the substance of our Plea, we pretend to nothing but to clear the passage which they have stopped up, and was left free and open for us in the time of the Apostles and Fathers; we desire not to be imposed upon by their later usurpations: we plead for no more but that the Church of God may have the same purity and integrity which it had in the primitive times, and that things may not only be called by the names by which the Fathers have called them; but that they may be such as the Fathers have left them. But otherwise let them boast never so much of the largeness of their Stream, of the Antiquity of their Channel, of the holiness of their Waters, of the number of their Ports, and the riches of their Trading; nay, and let them call their stream by the name of the *Ocean* too (if they please,) yet we envy them not their *Admah* and *Pharpar* and all the Rivers of *Damascus*, so we may sit down quietly by these living waters of *Jordan*. We are contented with the miracles which the Apostles wrought without forging or believing new ones; we are satisfied with the gift of strange tongues which they had; we know no necessity now of *speaking* much less of *praying* in an *unknown tongue*: we believe that Spirit infallible which inspired the Apostles in their holy Writings; and those we acknowledge, embrace, and I hope are willing to die for: But if any upstart Spirit pretend to sit in an infallible Chair, we desire not to be brought under bondage to it, till we see the same miracles wrought by vertue of it, which were wrought by the Apostles to attest their infallibility.

3. The last thing to be spoken to, is, *the season* that this effusion of the Spirit was reserved for, which was after the glorious ascension of Christ to Heaven. This was reserved as the great *Donative* after his Triumph over Principalities and Powers; when he was ascended up on high, he sends down the greatest gift that ever was bestowed upon mankind, *viz.* this gift of his Holy Spirit. Hereby Christ discoverd the greatness of his Purchase, the height of his Glory, the exercise of his Power, the assurance of his Resurrection and Ascension: and the care he took of his Church and People; by letting them see that he made good his last promise to them of sending them another Comforter who should be with them to assist them in all their undertakings, to direct them in their doubts, to plead their cause for them against all the vain oppositions of men. And he should not continue with them for a little time as Christ had done, but he should abide with them for ever, *i.e.* so as not to be taken from them as himself was, but should remain with them, as a pledge of his love, as a testimony of his truth, as an earnest of God's favour to them now, and their future inheritance in heaven; for he should comfort them by his presence, guide them by his counsel, and at last bring them to glory.

Nothing now remains but that as the occasion of our rejoicing on this day doth so much exceed that of the Jews at their ceremony of *pouring out the water*; so our joy should as much exceed in the nature and kind of it the mirth and jollity which was then used by them. With what joy did the *Israelites* when they were almost burnt up with thirst in the Wilderness tast of the pleasant streams which issued out of the rock? \* *that rock*, saith the Apostle, *was Christ*, and the gifts of the Spirit are that stream of living water which flows from him, and shall  
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\* 1 Cor.  
10. 4.



not we express our thankfulness for so great and unvaluable a mercy? Our joy cannot be too great for such a gift as this so it be of the nature of it, *i. e.* a spiritual joy. The Holy Ghost ought to be the Fountain of that joy which we express for God's giving him to his Church. Let us not then affront that good Spirit, while we pretend to bless God for him; let us not grieve him by our presumptuous sins, nor resist his motions in our hearts by our wilful continuance in them. The best way we can express our thankfulness is by yielding up our selves to be guided by him in a holy life, and then we may be sure our joy shall never end with our lives, but shall be continued with a greater fulness for evermore.

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# SERMON X.

Preached at

## WHITE-HALL,

*March 2d. 1669.*

ISAIAH LVII. 21.

*There is no peace, saith my God, to the Wicked.*

**I**F we were bound to judge of things only by appearance, and to esteem all persons happy who are made the object of the envy of some and the flattery of others, this Text would seem to be a strange Paradox, and inconsistent with what daily happens in the World. For what complaint hath been more frequent among men almost in all Ages, than that peace and prosperity hath been the portion of the wicked, that their troubles have not been like other mens, that none seem to enjoy greater pleasures in this world than they who live as if there were no other? The consideration of which hath been a matter of great offence to the weak, and of surprize to the wisest; till they have searched more deeply into the nature of these things (which the more men have done the better esteem they have always had of divine providence) and from thence have understood that the true felicity of a man's life lies in the contentment of his own mind, which can never arise from any thing without himself, nor be enjoyed till all be well within. For when we compare the state of humane nature with that of the beings inferior to it, we shall easily find that as man was designed for a greater happiness than they are capable of; so that cannot lie in any thing which he enjoys in common with them, (such as the pleasures of our senses are) but must consist in some peculiar excellencies of his being. And as the capacity of misery is always proportionable to that of happiness; so the measure and the kind of that must be taken in the same manner that we do the other. Where there is no sense of pleasure, there can be none of pain; where all pleasure is confined to sense, the pain must be so too; but where the greatest pleasures are intellectual, the greatest torments must be those of the mind. From whence it follows that nothing doth so much conduce to the proper happiness of man, as that which doth the most promote the peace and serenity of his mind: nothing can make him more miserable than that which causeth the greatest disturbance in it. If we can then make it appear that the highest honours, the greatest riches, and the softest pleasures can never satisfy the desires, conquer the fears, nor allay the passions

of

of an ungoverned mind, we must search beyond these things for the foundations of its peace. And if notwithstanding them there may be such a sting in the conscience of a wicked man, that may inflame his mind to so great a height of rage and fury, which the diversions of the World cannot prevent, nor all its pleasures cure: we are especially concerned to fix such a notion of man's happiness, which either supposes a sound mind or else makes it so; without which all the other things so much admired can no more contribute towards any true contentment than a magnificent Palace, or a curiously wrought Bed to the cure of the Gout or Stone. All which I speak, (not as though I imagined any state of perfect tranquility or compleat happiness were attainable by any man in this present life: for as long as the causes are imperfect, the effect must be so too: and those Philosophers who discoursed so much of a happy state of life, did but frame *Ideas in Morals* as they did in *Politicks*, not as though it were possible for any to reach to the exactness of them, but those were to be accounted best which came the nearest to them:) but I therefore speak concerning a happy state of life for these two reasons.

I. That though none can be perfectly happy, yet that some may be much more so than others are, *i. e.* they may enjoy far greater contentment of mind in any condition than others can do; they can bear crosses, and suffer injuries with a more equal temper; and when they meet with vicissitudes in the world, they wonder no more at it, than to see that the Wind changes its quarter, or that the Sea proves rough and tempestuous, which but a little before was very even and calm. They who understand humane nature, have few things left to wonder at; and they who do the least wonder, are the least surprized; and they who are the least surprized, are the least troubled; and those are the happiest men as this World goes, who meet with fewest troubles in it. The *Italians* have a shrewd Proverb that there is less money, less wisdom, less honesty in the world than men generally make account of; I will not stand to maintain the truth of it, but the less men believe of these things, the less they are deceived, and the less they are deceived the less they are troubled. For no troubles are greater than those which are the most unexpected; none are so unexpected as those which come upon men who are only undeceived by their own experience: for they undergo a great deal of trouble to gain a little wisdom, whereas a true judgment and consideration of these things before hand, keeps the mind of man more steady and fixt amidst all the contingencies of humane affairs. By which we see that wisdom of it self hath a great influence upon the quiet and peace of man's mind, and the happiness of his life: But if we add to that the inseparable property of true wisdom, *viz.* patience and submission to the Will of God upon the consideration of his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, he must be strangely blind that cannot discern a greater peace and serenity following these two in the minds of men, than where folly and irreligion reign. Thus far then we have gained, that Wisdom and piety tend very much to the lessening the troubles of a man's life; and therein lies the far greatest part of the happiness of this imperfect State. For it is a vain thing to expect in so open a condition as we live in here, that no cross Winds should blow upon us; but if they only shake our branches and make our leaves fall, as long as the root holds firm and the body entire, the former beauty and glory will return again. It can be no disparagement to the most skilful Pilot, to have his Vessel tossed upon a tempestuous Sea, but to escape with

with little damage when he sees others sink down and perish, shews the great difference which wisdom gives in the success, where the dangers are equal and common. So that not only some men may meet with fewer troubles in the world than others do: but supposing they meet with the same, some are far more happy in passing through them than others are. And this is the fairest sense I know can be given of those otherwise extravagant speeches of the Philosophers of old, concerning *the Wise man being happy in the Bull of Phalaris, or under the greatest racks and torments*; not as though they could be so senseless to imagine that any man could be as happy in his torments as out of them; but that taking him in the same state with another man, who wants that constancy of mind which he hath, he may be said to be happy in respect of the other. By which we see, that although no state of life can be said to be compleatly happy, yet some may be much nearer than others can be. Which was necessary to be promised in order to the right understanding the design of our following Discourse: which is to shew,

2. That some course of life to any man who considers what he doth is utterly inconsistent with a state of Peace and Tranquility; I mean the course of Sin and Wickedness. So the Prophet assures us from the mouth of God himself in the words of the Text. *There is no peace, saith my God, to the Wicked.* Which words are spoken on purpose by the Prophet, to shew how much the wickedness of men doth hinder them from enjoying that peace and happiness which they might have had without it; for in the foregoing words he represents God as shewing great pity to the scattered remainders of a broken and distressed people; though he had punished them severely for their sins, and banished them out of their native country, yet he promiseth them, *that those who put their trust in him should possess the land, and again inherit his holy mountain, v. 13.* and therefore speaks *that the way might be cast up and prepared for their return,* and every impediment taken out of the way, *v. 14. for the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, will again dwell in his high and holy place, viz. at Heirusalem;* (so the words may be understood, for the Hebrew verb is future) but especially with those who were humbled for their sins, who are here called *the humble and contrite ones, v. 15.* For *God would not always contend with them,* for he knew they were not able to stand before him, *v. 16.* and although his punishment of them was just for their sins, *v. 17.* yet *God took notice of their repentance,* and would therefore *heal their breaches,* and conduct them back again to their own land, and thereby give so great an occasion of joy and triumph, that by it he is said *to restore comforts to those who mourned* for the calamities they lay under, *v. 18.* yea he would grant them so much inward peace and outward prosperity, that they should far and near joyn in their praises to God for it; and therefore he is said *to create the fruit of the lips peace, peace, &c.* But all this while they must have a care of deceiving themselves, though God did restore them to their own land with abundance of joy and peace, in expectation that the remembrance of their former calamities, and the present blessings they enjoyed, would make them abhor the sins which had provoked God to punish them; yet if they should return to their wickedness again, or continue in it after so great mercies, they would soon find that their wickedness would overthrow their peace, and nothing but discontent and trouble would follow upon it, as the natural product of it. *For like the troubled Sea that is tossed up and down*

with

with violent and impetuous winds, fomes and rages, one wave beating against another; and the effect of all this commotion is nothing but casting upon the Neighbour shore a greater burden of unprofitable mire and dirt: such would the effect of their wickedness be among them, *v. 20.* it would make them restless and unquiet in themselves, having no one certain motion but tossed up and down with every contrary blast of wind, and producing nothing by all these various agitations but unprofitable counsels and unsuccessful designs. But lest the Prophet should be supposed to speak all this out of discontent and passion, he confirms what he had said from the mouth of God in these few but smart words of the Text. *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

The words we see are general and indefinite, both as to the nature of the *Peace* here mentioned, and the notion of *Wickedness* implied; and therefore I shall handle them in their due extent, by shewing that no one kind of true peace is consistent with any sort of prevailing wickedness: whether by *peace* we mean the *peace* a man hath *with himself* in the tranquility of his mind; or the *peace* which men have in society with one another. In either of these senses it will appear true, *that there is no peace to the wicked.*

1. Taking *peace*, for the *tranquility of a man's mind*; in order to which it is necessary for a man to have some certain foundation to build his peace upon, and that he be secured from those things which will overthrow it: both which shew it impossible for a wicked man to have any true peace in his mind, because he can have no certain grounds to build it upon; and those things do accompany his wickedness, which will certainly overthrow it.

1. A Wicked man can have no certain foundations for his peace. By which I do not mean any contracted dulness, or brutish stupidity, which if we will call *peace* the most insensible parts of the creation do infinitely exceed us in it, but such a composure and settlement of our minds, which ariseth from a due consideration of things, and differs as much from the former temper as a vigorous and healthful state of body doth from the dull effects of a Lethargy. And such a peace as this no wicked man can ever have but upon one of these suppositions.

Either (1.) That wickedness is but a meer name of disgrace set upon some kind of actions, but that really there is no such a thing as sin, or the differences of good and evil; or else,

(2.) Supposing there is such a thing as sin, it is ridiculous to believe there ever should be such a punishment of it as men are affrighted with;

(3.) Or lastly, supposing there be a punishment of sin to come, it is madness to abstain from the present pleasures of sin for the fear of it. These being only the imaginable grounds a wicked man can have any peace in his mind from; I shall particular shew the falseness and the folly of them.

1. That there is no such thing as Sin or Wickedness in the world, and that the differences of good and evil are merely arbitrary things, and that those are names only imposed upon things by the more cunning sort of men to affright men from the doing some actions, and to encourage them to do others. but what a miserable case are those in, who can never enjoy any contentment in themselves unless all the differences of good and evil be utterly destroyed! We should conclude that man's condition desperate, who believes it impossible for him to have any ease in his mind, unless he could be transformed into the shape

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of a beast, or petrified into the hardness of a rock. These are things not utterly impossible, but yet they are possible in so remote a degree, that it is all one to say, he can have no ease, as to say, that he expects it only upon those terms: But it is utterly inconsistent with the supposition of humane nature, or a being endued and acting with reason, to make all things equally good or evil: For what doth reason signify as it respects the actions of men, but a faculty of discerning what is good and fitting to be done, from what is evil and ought to be avoided? And to what purpose is such a faculty given us, if there be no such difference in the nature of things? Might not men with equal probability argue that there is no such thing as a difference in the things about which life and sense are conversant, as in those wherein reason is employed? With what impatience would those men be heard who should assert that there is no such thing as a difference in the qualities of meats and drinks, but that they do all equally tend to the preservation of life, that it is pedantical and beneath a Gentleman to talk of any such thing as *Poisons*, that will so suddenly and certainly destroy mens lives, and that these are things which none talk of or believe besides those whose trade is either to kill or cure men? With how much wit and subtilty might a man argue upon these things, that it is impossible for any man to define what the nature of poison is, or in what manner it destroys the life of man, that men have conquered the malignity of it by use, and that the same things which have been poison to some, have been food and nourishment to others? But notwithstanding all these plausible arguments, none of these brave Spirits dare venture the experiment upon themselves: and yet these (only changing the terms) are the very same arguments used against the natural differences of good and evil; *viz.* the difficulty of defining or setting the exact bounds of them, and the different customs or apprehensions of men in the world concerning the things which are called good and evil. If we proceed farther to the objects of sense, how ridiculous would those persons appear that should with a mighty confidence go about to persuade men, that the differences between light and darkness, between pleasure and pain, between smells and tastes and noises are but phantastick and imaginary things? Who would ever believe that those are men of the most excellent sight to whom light and darkness are equal? (for others who pretend not to so much wit, are wont to call such persons blind.) Or that those have the most exquisite sense, that feel no difference of pain and pleasure, (which was wont to be thought the sign of no sense at all.) And surely the persons I am now arguing against, love their palats too well, to admire those who can discern no difference of tastes; and would be well enough contented to be thought deaf if they could put no distinction between the pleasant sound of vocal or instrumental Musick, and the harsh jarring of two Saws drawn cross each other. Thus it appears that nothing would make men more ridiculous than to explode and laugh at the difference that there is in the means of life and the objects of sense. Let us now proceed higher: Dare any man say there is no such thing as Reason in Man, because there appears so little of the truth of it in Men, and so much of the counterfeit of it in Brutes? Or that there is no such thing as a difference of Truth and Falshood, because they are so commonly mistaken for one another? What reason then imaginable can there be, that there should not be as wide a distance in the matters of our choice, as in the objects of our sense and understanding?

standing? Is it that we have natural faculties of sense and perception, but not of choice? that every one is able to refute by his constant experience, that finds a greater liberty in his choice, than in his perception. The reason of which is wholly unintelligible, unless a difference be found in the nature of the things proposed to his choice; that some have a greater excellency and commendableness in them, more agreeable to humane nature, more satisfactory to the minds of those who choose them, than others are. And must all this difference be destroyed, meerly because all men are not agreed, what things are good and what evil? We call goodness the beauty of the soul; and do men question whether there be such a thing as beauty at all, because there are so many different opinions in the world about it? Or is deformity ever the less real, because the several nations of the world represent it in a colour different from their own? Those arguments then against the natural differences of good and evil must needs appear ridiculous, which will be granted to hold in nothing else but only the thing in question. And yet in the midst of all the ruins and decays of humane nature, we find such evident footsteps and impressions of the differences of good and evil in the minds of men, which no force could extinguish, no time could deface, no customs could alter. Let us search the records of ancient times, and enquire into the latter discoveries of nations, we shall find none so barbarous and brutish as not to allow the differences of good and evil; so far as to acknowledge, that there are some things which naturally deserve to be praised, and others which deserve to be punished. Whereas if good and evil were meerly names of things, there can be no reason assigned, why praise and honour should necessarily belong to some things, and infamy and disgrace to follow others. If the things themselves be arbitrary, the consequences of them would be so too. But is it possible to imagine that any man should deserve to be punished as much for being true to his trust, as for betraying it; for honouring his Parents, as for destroying them; for giving to every one their due, as for all the arts of injustice and oppression? Is it possible for men to suffer as much in their esteem, for their fidelity, temperance, and chastity, as they always do for their falseness, intemperance, and lasciviousness? How comes the very name of a lie to be a matter of so much reproach and dishonour, that the giving of it is thought an injury so great as cannot be expiated without the satisfaction of the giver's blood, if it be in it self so indifferent a thing? Nay, I dare appeal to the consciences of the most wicked persons, whether they are so well pleased with themselves when they come reeking from the satisfaction of their lusts, and sodden with the continuance of their debaucheries, as when they have been paying their devotions to God, or their duties to their Parents, or their respects to their Country or Friends? Is there not (whether they will or no) an inward shame, and secret regret and disquiet following the one, and nothing but ease and contentment the other? What should make this difference in those persons who love their vices far more than they do the other? and if it were possible for them, would bring vertue more out of countenance than sin is: yet after all their endeavours, though vice hath the stronger Interest, vertue hath the greater Reverence. Thus considering humane nature as it is, we find indelible characters remaining upon it of the natural differences of good and evil; but then if we consider it with a respect to the Maker of it, that will cast a clearer light

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upon them, and make those characters appear more discernable. For nothing can be more absurd than to imagine a creature owing its being, and all it hath to the bounty of a Being infinite in all Perfections, and yet not to be obliged to give all honour, worship and service to it. To rip up the bowels of a Mother to whom a man owes his coming into the world; to assassinate a Prince, to whom he owes all the honours and riches he hath in it; are crimes of so black a nature, that the worst of Men can hardly be supposed to commit them, nor the worst of Devils to defend them: But to blaspheme God and to deride his service, seems to have a much greater malignity in it, in as much as our obligations to his honour and service, are much greater than they can be to any created Being. But if there be no natural differences of good and evil, even this must be accounted an indifferent thing, as well as the former: and what safety can there be in conversing with those men, whom no bonds of Religion, Nature, or Gratitude can tie? Let us, if it were possible, suppose a Society of men constituted of such who make all things equally good and evil in their own nature, what a monstrous *Leviathan* would they make among them? no Religion, no Law, no Kindness, no Promises, no Trust, no Contracts could ever oblige them not to do any thing which they thought might be done with safety. By which it appears that these principles are so inconsistent with humane Nature, and all the bonds of Religion and Duty, that whoever owns them must suppose Mankind more savage than the beasts of prey, he must renounce his Reason, destroy all Religion, and disown a Deity. For if there be a God, we must be inviolably bound to observe and obey him; and the very notion of a God implies a Being infinitely perfect; and if there be such perfections in God, they cannot but be so in their own nature, and if they be so in their own nature, they must in their degree be so in us as well as in him; so that if Goodness, Holiness and Righteousness be absolute perfections as they are in God, they must be perfections so far as they are in us; and the contrary must be imperfections; which makes the differences of good and evil so far from being arbitrary, that those things which agree to the perfections of God as well as his will must needs be good, and those which are repugnant to them must needs be evil. The result of all is, that if a wicked man can have no peace in his mind, without overthrowing the differences of good and evil, he can have no peace without the greatest violence offered to God, to nature, and himself; and if this be the way to Peace, let his Reason judge.

2. The second foundation which a wicked man must build his peace upon is, that supposing there be such a thing as sin, yet that men have no cause to disturb themselves with the fears of so great a punishment to follow after, as that which sinners are affrighted with. But what security can a sinner have against the fears of punishment when his conscience condemns him for the guilt of his sins? Is it that God takes no notice at all of the actions of men, that he will not disturb his own eternal peace and happiness by observing all their follies? So some of old imagined, who pretended that out of meer kindness to the Deity they gave him his *Quietus est*, and took from him as much as in them lay, the care and government of the world; but it was really a greater kindness to their lusts which made them do it, and makes many now-a-days so willing upon the same frivolous pretences to exclude the providence of God out of the world; for can any man who considers what



God is, think his providence inconsistent with his happiness? If we speak of such weak and imperfect Beings as the wisest of mankind are, it might not a little contribute to their peace to be eased of the cares of Government. But the reason of that is, because all things cannot be foreseen by them before they happen, nor well managed when they do; whence come oversights and disappointments, and consequently all the uneasy effects of these. But when we speak of God, we speak of a Being infinitely Wise and Powerful, from whom nothing can be hid; and whom nothing can resist: and what can be imagined more easy than for a conjunction of infinite Wisdom and Power, to contrive and manage all the affairs of the World? If therefore wicked men could suppose that God could not know what they did, or could not punish them if he knew it, they might indulge themselves in greater security? But to suppose his Wisdom so great that he cannot but know their actions; and his Power so irresistible, that it is impossible for them to stand before him when he designs to punish; to flatter themselves with the hopes of impunity is an extravagant piece of folly and madness. Or is it then, that though God doth take notice of their actions, he will not be so much displeas'd as to punish them? but this is as repugnant to the Justice and Holiness of God, as the other was to his Wisdom and Power. Will not the righteous God, who hath made Laws to govern mankind, see to the execution of them? for if he did not hate sin, why did he so strictly forbid it? if he doth hate sin, he will severely punish it. Nay hath he not been severe already in the execution of his judgments upon the world for sin? what did *Adam* and his posterity suffer for the first sin? what did the old world, *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, the people of the Jews suffer for their wickedness? And is not he the same God still? Is his hand shortned that he cannot strike, or doth his heart fail that he dare not punish? Surely of all Nations we have no cause to think so, and of all Ages, not in this of ours; wherein we have smarted so much by the just displeasure of God against our sins. But where then lies the sinner's hope? Is it at last, that though God may sometimes punish men in this life for their sins, he will never do it in that to come? If he could have said it was impossible he should do it, and proved it sufficiently, there might have been some ground for his security, but that is impossible he should ever do; but to hope he will not do it when he hath declared that he will, is instead of bringing peace to his own mind to set God at variance with himself. For nothing can be more plainly revealed, more frequently inculcated, more earnestly pressed, than *\* that there is a day of wrath to come, wherein* <sup>\* Rom. 2. 5, 6, 8, 9.</sup> *in the righteous judgment of God shall be revealed; and wherein God will render to every man according to his deeds: wherein tribulation, and anguish, and wrath shall be upon every soul of man that doth evil; wherein the secrets of all hearts and actions shall be disclosed, when the graves shall be opened, † and they that have done good shall come forth to the resur- <sup>† Joh. 5. 29.</sup> *rection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation. For the Lord Jesus himself, even he who died for the salvation of all penitent sinners, || shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty An-* <sup>|| 2 Thess. 1. 7, 8, 9.</sup> *gels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the Gospel of Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. Then shall that dreadful sentence be pass'd upon all impenitent sinners, \* Depart from* <sup>\* Matth. 25. 41.</sup> *me ye Cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.**

Which words are so full of horreur and astonishment as might not only disturb the sinner's peace and security, but awaken him to such a sense of his sins, as to loath, abhor and forsake them, and thereby fly from the wrath to come.

3. But after all this, is it possible to suppose, that any should think their present pleasures would countervail all the miseries of another life? which is the last imaginable foundation for a sinner's peace, while he continues in his wickedness. The most professed *Epicureans* that ever were, made this one of their fundamental maxims; That no pleasure was to be chosen, which brought after it a pain greater than itself: on which account they made temperance and sobriety necessary to a pleasant life, because excesses and debaucheries leave far more of burden than of ease behind them. But what would these men have said, if they had believed the intolerable anguish of a tormented mind, the racks of an enraged conscience, the fire of everlasting vengeance to be the consequent of all the pleasures of sin? they must upon their own principles have concluded that none but mad-men and fools would ever venture upon them. And that not only because the after-pain would so much exceed the present pleasure; but because the fears of that pain to come must abate proportionably of the pleasure which might otherwise be enjoy'd. Suppose a man certainly knew that upon the pleasing his palat with the most excellent Wine, and gratifying his appetite with the most delicate Food, he must be racked with the Stone, and tormented with the Gout as long as he should live; can we imagine such a person could have any pleasure in his mind (whatever his palat had) in the enjoyment of them while he did consider the consequent of them. But what are these miseries compared with the insupportable horreur of a conscience loaden with guilt, sunk under despair, having a gnawing worm and unquenchable flames? the wrath of an Almighty God, and the fury of his vengeance to encounter with, without the least hopes of conquering? I do not now ask, what the sinner will then think of all his Atheism and Infidelity when the greatness of his misery shall convince him that it is an Almighty hand which lays it upon him, nor what pleasure he can have in the thoughts of his former excesses, when not one drop can be procured for the mitigation of his flames? nor what satisfaction those lusts have given him, the very thoughts of which pierce his soul, and if it were possible would rend him in pieces with the torment of them: but that which I demand is, what peace of mind a sinner can have in this world who knows not how soon he may be dispatched to that place of torment? can he bind the hands of the Almighty, that he shall not snatch him away till he doth repent? or can he reverse the decrees of heaven, or suspend the execution of them? can he abrogate the force of his Laws, and make his own terms with God? can he dissolve the chains of darkness with a few death-bed tears and quench the flames of another world with them? O foolish sinners, who hath betwitched them with these deceitful dreams? will heaven-gates fly open with the strength of a few dying groans? will the mouth of hell be stopt with the bare lamentation of a sinner? Are there such charms in some penitent words extorted from the fear of approaching misery, that God himself is not able to resist them? Certainly there is no deceit more dangerous, nor I fear more common in the world, than for men to think that God is so easie to pardon sin, that though they spend their lives in satisfying their lusts; they

they shall make amends for all by a dying sorrow and a gasping repentance. As though the unsaying what he had done, or wishing we had done otherwise since we can do it no longer, (for that is the bottom of all putting off repentance to the last) were abundant compensation to the justice of God, for the affronts of his Majesty, contempt of his Laws, abuse of his Patience, and all the large Indictments of wilful and presumptuous sins; which the whole course of our lives is charged with. The supposal of which makes the whole design of Religion signify very little in the World.

Thus we have examined the foundations of a sinner's peace, and found them very false and fallacious.

2. We are now to shew that those things do accompany a sinner's course of life, which certainly overthrow his peace; which are these two. 1. The reflections of his Mind. 2. The violence of his Passions.

1. The reflections of his Mind, which he can neither hinder nor be pleased with. No doubt if it were possible for him to deprive himself of the greatest excellency of his being, it would be the first work he would do, to break the glass which shews him his deformity. For as our Saviour said, \* *Every one that doth evil hateth the light lest his deeds should be reprov'd*; not only the light without which discovers them, but that light of conscience within, which not only shines but burns too. Hence proceeds that great uneasiness which a sinner feels within as often as he considers what he hath done amiss, which we call the remorse of conscience; and is the natural consequent of the violence a man offers to his reason in his evil actions. It was thought a sufficient vindication of the innocency of two Brothers by the Roman Judges, when they were accused for Parricide; that although their Father was murdered in the same room where they lay, and no other person was found on whom they could fasten the suspicion of it, yet in the morning the door was open and they fast asleep. For as the Orator saith, † *No man can imagine, that those who had broken all the Laws of God and nature by so great an act of wickedness, could presently sleep upon it: for they who do such things can neither rest without care, nor breath without fear. We are not to believe, saith he, the fables of the Poets, as though wicked men were haunted and terrified with the burning torches of the furies; but every man's wickedness is the greatest terrour to himself, and the evil thoughts which pursue wicked men are their constant and domestick furies.* It would be endless to repeat what force the more civil Heathens have given to conscience either way, as to the peace which follows innocency, and the disquiet which follows guilt. Which they looked on as the great thing which governed the world, || *Quâ sublatâ jacent omnia*, as the Orator speaks, without which all things would be in great disorder; for these punishments they are sure not to escape, \* though they may do others; and these they thought so great and weighty that upon this ground they vindicated divine providence as to the seeming prosperity of wicked men, thinking it the most unreasonable thing in the world, to call those persons happy who suffered under the severe lashes of their own consciences. If there were such a force in the consciences of those who had nothing but the light of nature to direct them, how much greater weight must there be when † *the terrours of the Lord* are made known by himself, || *and the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men?* I know that wicked men in the height

\* John 3.  
20.

† Pro Sex-  
tior. 23.

|| De N.  
Dorum.

\* De leg.  
l. 1.

† 2 Cor.  
5. 11.  
|| Rom.  
1. 18.

height of their debaucheries pretend to be above these things, and are ready to laugh at them as the effects of a strong spleen and a weak brain: but I appeal to their most sober thoughts, when the streams of wine are evaporated, and the intoxication of evil company is removed from them, when in the deep and silent night, they revolve in their minds the actions of the foregoing day; what satisfaction they then take in all the sinful pleasures they have pursued so eagerly? but especially, when either their lusts have consumed their bodies, or the vengeance of God hath overtaken them; when death begins to seize upon their vitals, and themselves not wholly stupified through the power of their sins or their disease, let then, if it were possible, any represent the fears, the horror and astonishment which the consciences of wicked men labour under in remembrance of their evil actions. How mean and poor would they leave themselves if with all their honours and riches they could purchase to themselves a reprieve from death and from the miseries which follow after it? what would they then give for the comfort of a good conscience, and the fruit of a holy, righteous, and sober life? with what another sense of Religion do men whose minds are awakened speak then, in comparison of what they did in the days of their mirth and jollity? Neither is this *to take them at the greatest disadvantage*, as some of them have been ready to say; for I suppose their minds as clear then as at any time, and so much the clearer, because freed from the impediments of such freedom of their thoughts at another time; for the same thoughts would have possessed them before, only the pleasures and the hopes of life diverted their minds from them; but now the nearness of the things they feared; and the weight and consequence of them make them more diligently examine and impartially consider them. But that demonstrates the great misery of a sinner's State; that what cures the other greatest troubles of our life, doth the most increase his, which is the exercise of reason and consideration, that allays the power of griefs, that easeth the mind of vain fears, that prevents many troubles and cures others, that governs other passions and keeps them in their due bounds; but this is it which of all things doth the most increase the trouble of a wicked man's mind; for the more he considers, the worse he finds his condition; and while he finds his condition so bad, he can never enjoy any peace in his mind.

2. The violence of his Passions: those a wicked man hath lost the command of, or else he could never be a wicked man; and whosoever is under the power of any unruly passion, forfeits all his peace by it. For what peace can ever be expected in such a State of violence and usurpation, where the calm government of reason is cast off as an unnecessary burden, and every passion under the pretence of liberty sets up for an arbitrary power? Nay what confusion and disorder must needs follow, where the powers of the mind, which ought to keep all in order, are themselves in subjection to their own slaves: and none ever govern so ill as those which ought to obey. How serene and quiet is the mind of a man where the superiour faculties preserve their just authority? How composed is his temper, how moderate his desires, how well governed his fears! But where once that authority is lost, how extravagant is the rage of men, how unruly their lusts, how predominant their fears! What peace had *Xerxes* in his mind, when instead of conquering his foolish passion, he challenged Mount *Athos* into the field, and no doubt would have run fast enough  
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if he had seen it moving? What pleasure was it to see that mighty Monarch whip the Sea in a rage, as though the Waves had been under his discipline, and would run the faster for the fear of his rod? What harm had the hair of his head done to that man who pulled it off with the violence of his passion, *as though, as the Philosopher told him, baldness would assuage his grief?* Was ever *Varus* the nearer to restoring his Legions for *Augustus* knocking his head against the Wall in a rage about the loss of them? What injury did *Neptune* suffer, when he displaced his image in the *Circensian* games, because he had an ill Voyage at Sea? What height of madness and folly did that modern Priuce's rage betray him to, who, as the French Moralist saith, *\* having received a blow from heaven, swore to be revenged on Almighty God, and for ten years space forbid all publick exercise of devotion towards him?* I instance in these things to let us see there is nothing so ridiculous, nothing so absurd, nothing so irreligious but a violent passion may betray men to. And if such things ever break forth into actions, what may we conceive the inward disturbance is, where the outward shew (which usually dissembles the inward passion,) betrayed so much rage and disorder; for where such flames break out, what combustion may we conceive within? But it is not only this kind of passion which is so great an enemy to the peace of a man's mind, but when his desires are restless, and his fears unconquerable; and this is the case of every wicked man. His lusts inflame him and the means he uses to quench them inrage them more; his ambition grows greater as his honour doth; and there is no hopes of a cure, where the disease thrives under the remedy; his love of riches is necessary to maintain his honour and feed his lusts; and where passions so great, so many, so different, all increase by being gratified, what disturbance and confusion follows? But supposing that vices in men may agree (as the Devils in Hell do) to the destruction of men's souls; yet what security can a wicked man have against the power of his fears? And we all know no passion disquiets more than that doth? And how many sorts of fears possess a sinner's mind? fears of disappointments, fears of discovery, and fears of punishment; but supposing he could master all the rest, and the fears of punishment as to this life too; yet the fears of that to come is sufficient to rob him of any peace in his mind, and impossible to be overcome by him. For no sound reason can be given against his fears, but the strongest arguments in the world to confirm them. Nay the greatest grounds of others comforts are the strongest foundations for his fears, as the belief of a God, and Providence, and a life to come: And what can give that man peace, whom the very thoughts of the God of peace doth disturb so much? That is the first kind of Peace we have shewed to be inconsistent with a course of wickedness, which is the *peace and tranquillity of a man's own mind.*

2. Taking this peace for an *outward peace*, and so these words not in respect of every person in particular, and that peace which belongs to him as such, but as they are joyned together in community; so they imply that nothing undermines our *civil peace* and the prosperity of a nation so much as prevailing wickedness doth. So that although mighty deliverances were given the people of the Jews in a very strange and unexpected manner, when God raised up *Cyrus* his servant, a man from whom no kindness was expected, and made him the great instrument of setting the people in their land under their own lawful Princes; and restored the true worship of God among them; yet if they grew wau-

ton in the days of their prosperity, and forgot the God who delivered them, they must expect a return of Calamities again upon them; for *there is no Peace, saith my God, to the wicked, i.e.* This is the method of his Providence, and the way he useth in governing the World; while Religion and Vertue flourish among them, they may hope for peace and prosperity; but if those decay, and sin and wickedness prevail, no other arts imaginable will secure a lasting peace, or an abiding tranquillity. All other ways are but tricks and devices, and there are many of them in the hearts of men, but the Counsel of the Lord that shall stand against them all; and that Counsel he hath declared himself by the mouth of another Prophet, \* *At what instant I shall speak concerning a Nation and concerning a Kingdom to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then will I repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.* Thus we find it was in this people of the Jews, upon their first return from captivity they shewed some zeal towards the rebuilding the Temple and setting the worship of God there; but this fit did not hold them long, they soon fell back to their former sins and disobedience to the Laws of God; upon this they brake out into greater schisms and factions in matters of Religion than ever were known among them before; for then the *Pharisees* fell into a separation under a pretence of greater sanctity and severity of life, and these by their shew of zeal gained a mighty interest among the people, so great that the Princes stood in awe of them; then the *Sadduces*, (who were most part Courtiers, as *Josephus* tells us) out of opposition to the other, looked on Religion as a meer political institution, cried out against faction and popularity, and questioned at least whether there were any Spirits or life to come. And what peace followed upon these things? very little among themselves we may be sure by the heats and animosities that were continually among them; the issue of which was, the Temple was prophaned by *Antiochus*, rifled by *Pompey*; their own Princes deposed, and Usurpers ruled over them; and when the Son of God himself could not reclaim them, their Temple, Nation, and Government were all involved in one common ruin. Thus we see how these words of the Prophet were fulfilled upon this people.

But some have been ready to say that *God's proceedings with the Jews ought not to be drawn into an example to any other nations, because his dealings with them were peculiar, and by vertue of a particular Covenant which God made with them, which he hath not done with any other nation in the world.* This objection were of great force, if God himself had not in the words before mentioned, declared the same concerning any other Nation or Kingdom, and if the instances were not as remarkable in other people as in that of the Jews. If we search the Monuments of former Ages, and consider the strange revolutions which have happened in the mighty Empires and Kingdoms of the World; we shall find no one circumstance more considerable in them than this, That the Nations which God hath made use for a scourge to others, have been remarkable for nothing so much, as for the vertues opposite to the most prevailing vices among those who were overcome by them. Thus when the *Chaldean* Monarchy fell, the *Persians* who were the sword in God's right hand, were eminent for nothing more than their great temperance and frugality, while the *Babylonians* perished by their luxury and effeminacy. And when the *Persian* Monarchy degenerated into the same vices, the *Macedonians* were raised up to be the executioners of God's wrath upon them, because they were at that time freer than any

\* Jer. 18.  
9, 10.

any other people from those softening and destroying vices. And when the *Persian* luxury had infected their Conquerours, the severe Discipline and Vertue of the *Romans* made them more successful in subduing the remainders of the *Grecian* Empire, than their courage and number could. And when the *Romans* themselves (after a long time of God's forbearance with them, and several respites from punishment by the vertue and conduct of such excellent Princes as *Antoninus* and *Alexander Severus* in the Heathen, and *Constantine* and *Theodosius* in the Christian Empire) fell into as great a degeneracy of manners as any we ever read of, then did God let loose (as it were) the *Goths* and *Vandals* and other barbarous Nations out of their several Dens, who seemed to be designed rather to destroy than to conquer. So sudden, so numerous, so irresistible in most places were the incursions they made. But what was it which gave them so strange success? Was it their long practice and skill in military affairs? No, they were rude and unexperienced: was it their mighty courage? No, they were despised by the *Romans* as great Cowards, and begged for peace when it was denied them. But as \* *Salvian* tells us who lived in those times and knew the manners of both sides, the *Goths* and *Vandals* were of a very severe chastity, among whom fornication was punished sharply, and adultery a crime scarce heard of; whereas all manner of uncleanness and licentiousness did abound among the *Romans*, who yet were then called Christians. The *Goths* were devout and pious, acknowledging divine providence, making their solemn supplications to God before their victories, and returning him the praise of them afterwards; but the *Romans* were fallen into that degree of Irreligion and Atheism, that nothing was more common among them than to droll upon Religion. † *A nostris omnia* † P. 166. *fermè religiosa videntur*, as *Salvian* speaks: they thought all things managed by chance or fate, and ascribed very little to God. And where these sins abounded most, they were carried up and down as by a divine instinct, as they confessed themselves, and where they conquered, || as || P. 163. he particularly speaks of the *Vandals* in *Africa*, they purged all the stews of uncleanness, and made so great a reformation by the severity of their Laws, that even the *Romans* themselves were chaste among them. Thus we see how those great and mighty Empires have been broken to pieces by the weight of their impieties falling upon them.

May the consideration then of these things move us in time to a reformation of our lives, before our iniquities grow full and ripe for vengeance. We have seen many revolutions, and God knows how many more we may see; if that should be true of us, which the same Author saith of the *Romans* in the midst of all their changes, *Sola tantum vitia perdurant*, their vices remained the same still. Thanks be to God, that things have a fairer appearance at present than they have had, and never so good a time to amend as now: but if men flatter themselves with present security, and their sins increase as their fears abate, the clouds which seem dispersed may soon gather again, and the face of the Heavens will change if we do not.

And if it be not in our power to reclaim others from their sins, let us endeavour to preserve the honour of our Church by amending our own, and convince our enemies by living better than they: And give me leave to say, and so I conclude, that among all the expedients which have been thought of for the peace of this Church and Nation, that of leaving off our sins, and leading vertuous and exemplary lives, will at last prove to be the most successful.

## SERMON XI.

Preached at

WHITE-HALL,

*March 27. 1672.*

2 CORINTH. V. 2.

*Knowing therefore the terrour of the Lord, we perswade men.*

**I**F ever any Religion was in all respects accomplished for so noble a design as the reformation of mankind, it was the Christian, whether we consider the Authority of those who first delivered it, or the weight of the arguments contained in it, and their agreeableness to the most prevailing passions of humane nature. Although the world was strangely degenerated before the coming of Christ; yet not to so great a degree, but that there were some who not only saw the necessity of a cure, but offered their assistance in order to it; whose attempts proved the more vain and fruitless, because they laboured under the same distempers themselves which they offered to cure in others: or the method they prescribed was mean and trivial, doubtful and uncertain, or else too nice and subtle to do any great good upon the world. But Christianity had not only a mighty advantage by the great holiness of those who preached it, but by the clearness and evidence, the strength and efficacy of those arguments which they used to perswade men. The nature of them is such that none who understand them can deny them to be great; their clearness such, that none that hear them can choose but understand them; the manner of recommending them such as all who understood themselves could not but desire to hear them. No arguments can be more proper to mankind than those which work upon their reason and consideration; no motives can stir up more to the exercise of this than their own happiness and misery; no happiness and misery can deserve to be so much considered as that which is eternal. And this eternal state, is that which above all other things the Christian Religion delivers with the greatest plainness, confirms with the strongest evidence, and enforces upon the consciences of men with the most powerful and persuasive Rhetorick. I need not go beyond my text for the proof of this, wherein we see that the Apostles design was *to perswade men, i. e.* to convince their judgments, to gain their affections, to reform their lives; that the argument they used for this end was no less than *the terrour of the*



*the Lord*, not the frowns of the World, nor the fear of Men, nor the malice of Devils; but the terrour of the Almighty, whose Majesty makes even the Devils tremble, whose Power is irresistable, and whose Wrath is insupportable. But it is not *the terrour of the Lord* in this world, which he here speaks of, although that be great enough to make us as miserable as we can be in this State: but *the terrour of the Lord* which shall appear at the dreadful day of judgment, of which he speaks in the verse before the text. \* *For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* This is *the terrour* here meant which relates to our final and eternal State in another world, *when we must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, &c.* And of this he speaks, not out of Poetical Fables, ancient Traditions, uncertain Conjectures, or probable Arguments, but from full assurance of the truth of what he delivers; *Knowing therefore the terrour of the Lord, we persuade men.* In which words we shall consider these particulars.

1. The argument which the Apostle makes choice of to persuade men, which is, *the terrour of the Lord.*
2. The great assurance he expresseth of the truth of it, *Knowing therefore the terrour of the Lord.*
3. The efficacy of it in order to the convincing and reforming mankind; *Knowing therefore, &c. we persuade men.*

1. The argument the Apostle makes choice of to persuade men by, *viz. the terrour of the Lord.* In the Gospel we find a mixture of the highest clemency and the greatest severity, the richest mercy and the strictest justice, the most glorious rewards and intollerable punishments; accordingly we find God therein described as a tender Father, and as a terrible Judge, as a God of peace, and as a God of vengeance, as an everlasting happiness and a consuming fire; and the Son of God as coming once with great humility, and again with Majesty and great glory; once, with all the infirmities of humane nature, and again with all the demonstrations of a Divine power and presence; once, as the Son of God to take away the sins of the world by his death and passion; and again, as Judge of the world with flaming fire to execute vengeance on all impenitent sinners. The intermixing of these in the doctrine of the Gospel was necessary in order to the benefit of Mankind by it, that such whom the condescension of his first appearance could not oblige to leave off their sins, the terrour of his second may astonish when they foresee the account that will be taken of their ingratitude and disobedience; that such who are apt to despise the meanness of his birth, the poverty of his life, and the shame of his death, may be filled with horror and amazement when they consider the Majesty of his second coming in the clouds \* *to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly, not only of their ungodly deeds, but of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.* And we shall easily see what great reason there is that this second coming of Christ to Judgment shall be called *the terrour of the Lord*, if we consider,

1. The terrour of the preparation for it.
2. The terrour of the appearance in it.
3. The terrour of the proceedings upon it.
4. The terrour of the sentence which shall then be passed.
  1. The terrour of the preparation for it; which is particularly described by St. Peter in these words, † *But the day of the Lord will come* † Jud. v. 15. † 2 Pet. 3. 10.

as a Thief in the night, in which the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent heat; the Earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up. This day will come as a Thief in the night, by way of surprise, when it is not looked for, and that makes it so much the more dreadful. A lesser calamity coming suddenly doth astonish more, than a far greater which hath been long expected; for, surprisals confound men's thoughts, daunt their spirits, and betray all the succours which reason offers. But when the surprise shall be one of the least astonishing circumstances of the misery men fall into, what unconceivable horror will possess their minds at the apprehension of it? what confusion and amazement may we imagine the soul of that man in, whom our Saviour speaks of in his parable, who being pleased with the fulness of his condition, \* said to his soul, Soul, thou hast

\* Luke 12. 19, 20. *much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry: but God said to him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be that thou hast provided? Had God only said, This night shall thy barns be burnt, and thy substance consumed to ashes, which thou hast laid up for so many years, that would have caused a strange consternation in him for the present, but he might have comforted himself with the hopes of living and getting more. But, this night shall thy soul be required of thee: O dreadful words! O the tremblings of body, the anguish of mind, the pangs and convulsions of conscience which such a one is tormented with at the hearing of them! What sad reflections doth he presently make upon his own folly? and must all the mirth and ease I promise my self for so many years, be at an end now in a very few hours? Nay must my mirth be so suddenly turned into bitter howlings, and my ease into a bed of flames? Must my soul be thus torn away from the things it loved, and go where it will hate to live and can never die? O miserable creature! to be thus deceived by my own folly, to be surpris'd after so many warnings, to betray my self into everlasting misery? Fear, horror and despair have already taken hold on me, and are carrying me, where they will never leave me.*

These are the Agonies but of one single person whom death snatches away in the midst of his years, his pleasures and his hopes; but such as these the greatest part of the world will fall into when that terrible day of the Lord shall come. † For as it was in the days of Noe; so shall

† Luke 17. 26, 27. 28, 29, 30. *it be also in the day of the Son of Man; they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the Ark; and the flood came and destroyed them all: Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from Heaven and destroyed them all: Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed, || For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole Earth. If some of these expressions seem to relate to the unexpected coming of Christ to judgment upon Hierusalem, we are to consider that was not only a fore-runner, but a figure of Christ's coming to judge the World. And that may be the great reason why our Saviour mixeth his discourses of both these so much together as he doth: for not only the judgment upon that nation was a draught, as it were, in little of the great day, but the symptoms and fore-runners of the one were to bear a proportion with the other: among which the strange security of that people before their destruction*

|| Ch. 21: 35.

struction was none of the least: And the surprize shall be so much the more astonishing when the day of the Lord shall come upon the whole World, as the terrour and consequents of that universal judgment shall exceed the overthrow of the Jewish Polity.

But supposing men were aware of its approach and prepared for it; the burning of the Temple and City of *Hierusalem*, though so frightful a spectacle to the beholders of it, was but a mean representation of the terrour that shall be at the conflagration of the whole World: When *the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise*, or with a mighty force, as some interpret it, *and the Elements shall melt with fervent heat*; i. e. when all the fiery bodies in the upper regions of this World, which have been kept so long in an even and regular course within their several limits, shall then be let loose again, and by a more rapid and violent motion shall put the World into confusion and a flame together. For then the present frame of things shall be dissolved, and the bounds set to the more subtile and active parts of matter shall be taken away; which mixing with the more gross and earthy, shall sever them from each other, and by their whirling and agitation set them all on fire. And if *\* the Stars falling to the Earth*, were to be understood in a literal sense, none seem so probable as this, That those æthereal fires shall then be scattered and dispersed throughout the Universe, so that the Earth and all the works that are therein shall be turned into one funeral Pile. Then the foundations of the Earth shall be shaken, and all the combustible matter which lies hid in the bowels of it shall break forth into prodigious flames; which while it rouls up and down within, making it self a passage out, will cause an universal quaking in all parts of the Earth, and make the Sea to roar with a mighty noise, which will either by the violent heat spend it self in vapour and smoak, or be swallowed up in the hollow places of the deep. Neither are we to imagine that only the sulphureous matter within the Earth shall by its kindling produce so general a conflagration, (although some Philosophers of old thought that sufficient for so great an effect) but as it was in the deluge of water, *† the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the Windows of Heaven were opened*; so shall it be in *this deluge of fire*, as one of the ancients calls it, not only mighty streams and rivers of Fire shall issue out of the bowels of the earth; but the cataracts above shall discharge such abundance of thunder and lightning, wherein God will rain down fire and brimstone from Heaven, that nothing shall be able to withstand the force of it. Then the *Craters* or breaches made in the earth by horrible earthquakes, caused by the violent eruptions of Fire, shall be wide enough to swallow up not only Cities but whole Countries too: And what shall remain of the spoils of this devouring enemy within, shall be consumed by the merciless fury of the thunder and lightning above. What will then become of all the glories of the World which are now so much admired and courted by foolish men? What will then become of the most magnificent piles, the most curious structures, the most stately palaces, the most lasting monuments, the most pleasant gardens, and the most delightful countries? they shall be all buried in one common heap of ruines, when the whole face of the earth shall be like the top of mount *Ætna* nothing but rubbish, and stones, and ashes, which, unskilful travellers have at a distance mistaken for Snow. What will then become of the pride and gallantry of the vain persons, the large possessions of the great, or the vast treasures

\* Revel: 6. 13.

† Gen. 7. 11.

fures of the rich ? the more they have had of these things only, the more fuel they have made for this destroying fire, which will have no respect to the honours, the greatness, or the riches of Men. Nay, what will then become of \* *the wicked and ungodly, who have scoffed at all these things, and walked after their own lusts, saying, Where is this promise of his coming, because all things yet continue as they were from the beginning of the creation ?* When this great day of his wrath is come, how shall they be able to stand or escape his fury ? Will they fly to the tops of the mountains ? that were only to stand more ready to be destroyed from Heaven. Will they hide themselves in the dens and the rocks of the mountains ? but there they fall into the burning furnaces of the earth ; and *the mountains may fall upon them, but can never hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.* Will they go down into the deep and convey themselves to the uttermost parts of the Sea ? but even there the storms and tempests of these showers of fire shall overtake them, and the vengeance of God shall pursue them to everlasting flames.

Consider now whether so dreadful a preparation for Christ's coming to judgment be not one great reason why it should be called *the terrour of the Lord ?* For can any thing be imagined more full of horrour and amazement than to see the whole World in a flame about us ? We may remember (and I hope we yet do so) when the flames of one City filled the minds of all the beholders with astonishment and fear : but what then would it do, not only to see the Earth vomit and cast forth fire every where about us, and the Sea to boyl and swell and froth like water in a seething pot, but to hear nothing but perpetual claps of thunder, and to see no light in the Heavens, but what the flashings of lightning give ? Could we imagine our selves at a convenient distance to behold the eruption of a burning mountain, such as *Ætna* and *Vesuvius* are, when the Earth about it trembles and groans, the Sea foams and rages, and the bowels of the Mountain roar through impatience of casting forth its burden, and at last gives it self ease by sending up a mixture of flames, and ashes, and smoak, and a flood of fire, spreading far and destroying where-ever it runs ; yet even this, though it be very apt to put men in apprehensions and fears of this great day, falls very far short of the terrour of it. Could we yet farther suppose that at the same time we could see fire and brimstone raining from Heaven on *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, the earth opening to devour *Corah* and his company, *Belshazzar* trembling at the hand-writing against the Wall, and the Jews destroying themselves in the fire of their Temple and City, this may somewhat higher advance our imaginations of the horrour of the world's conflagration, but yet we cannot reach the greatness of it: in as much as *the Heavens and the Earth which are now, are kept in store*, saith the Apostle, † *reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men ;* even those heavens whose beauty, and order, and motion, and influence we now admire, and that earth whose fruitful womb and richly adorned surface affords all the conveniencies of the life of man, must either be destroyed or at least purged and refined by this last and dreadful Fire. The expressions of which in Scripture being so frequent, so particular, so plain in Writers not affecting the lofty Prophetical stile, wherein fire is often used only to express the wrath of God, make it evident, that their meaning is not barely that the world shall be destroyed by the anger of God, but that this destruction shall be by real fire, which adds more to the sensible terrour of it, to all that shall behold it.

2. The terrour of Christ's appearance in that day. The design of the Scripture in setting forth the coming of Christ to judgment is to represent it in such a manner to us as is most apt to strike us with awe and terrour at the apprehension of it. Now the greatest appearance of Majesty among men is, either when a mighty Prince marches triumphantly in the midst of a Royal Army, with all the splendor of a Court and the discipline of a Camp, having his greatest attendants about him, and sending his Officers before him, who with the sound of Trumpets give notice of his approach, and is every where received with the shouts and acclamations of the people: or else, of a Prince, sitting upon his Throne of Majesty, set forth with all the Ornaments of State and Greatness, with all his Nobles and Courtiers standing about his Throne, and in his own Person calling Malefactors to account; and both these ways the appearance of Christ upon his second coming is represented to us, first \* *as coming in the Clouds of Heaven, i. e. riding triumphantly* (as it were upon a Chariot) on a body of light, brighter than the Son, having † *all the Heavenly host attending upon him*, and therefore he is said || *to come with power and great glory; and sending his Angels with a great sound of a trumpet before him; \* after whom the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trump of God.* Not as though we were to imagine any material trumpet, as some have grossly done, whose sound could reach over the whole earth; but the sound of the last trumpet seems to be the same with † *the voice of the Son of God, which the dead are said to hear and live; i. e. it shall be an effectual power for raising the dead, which may be therefore called the sound of the Trumpet*, because it supplies the use of one in calling all people together, and doth more lively represent to our capacities the Majesty of Christ's appearance with all the Heavenly host of Angels and Saints. Thus when God appeared upon Mount Sinai with his Holy Angels about him, we there read || *of the noise of the trumpet:* and when God shewed his glorious presence in the temple, he is said \* *to go up with a shout and the Lord with the sound of a trumpet;* and when he sets himself against his enemies, God himself is said † *to blow the trumpet, and to go with the whirlwinds of the South.* But besides this, we find Christ upon his second coming described as || *sitting on the throne of his glory, and all the Holy Angels about him, and all nations gathered before him to receive their sentence from him.* His Throne is said to be *great and white, i. e. most magnificent and glorious, and to make it the more dreadful; \* from it are said to proceed lightnings and thundrings and voices;* and so terrible is the Majesty of him that sits upon the throne † *that the Heaven and Earth are said to fly away from his face; but the dead small and great, are to stand before him and to be judged according to their works.* And if the appearances of a common Judge be so dreadful to a guilty prisoner, if the Majesty of an earthly Prince begets an awe and reverence where there is no fear of punishment, what may we then imagine when Justice and Majesty both meet in the person of the Judge, and fear and guilt in the Conscience of Offenders? Therefore it is said, || *Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the Earth shall wail because of him.* We find the best of men in Scripture seized on with a very unufal consternation at any extraordinary divine appearance: The sight upon Mount Sinai was so terrible even to Moses \* *that he did exceedingly fear and quake:* the vision which *Isaiah* had of the glory of God

\* Matth. 24. 25.

† 2 Thess. 1. 7.

|| Matth. 24. 31.

\* 1 Thess. 4. 16.

† John 5: 25.

|| Psalm

98. 17.

Exod. 20,

18.

\* Psalm. 47.

5.

† Zech.

9. 14.

|| Matth.

25. 31.

Rev. 20.

11.

\* Chap.

4. 5.

† Rev.

20. 11.

|| Rev. 1.

1. 7.

\* Heb.

12. 22.

made

\* Isai. 6. 5. made him cry out, *\* Wo is me for I am undone, for mine eyes have seen the King the Lord of Hosts* : When Daniel saw his vision, all his strength and vigour was gone, and though an Angel raised him from the ground, yet he faith of himself † *that he stood trembling*. If these whom God † Dan. 10. 8, 11. appeared to in a way of kindness were so possessed with fear, what hor-  
 || 2 Thef. 1. 7, 8. rour must needs seize upon the minds of the wicked when || *the Lord Je-  
 \* John 18. 6. sus shall be revealed from Heaven in flaming fire on purpose to take vengeance upon them* ? If in the days of his flesh there appeared so much Majesty in his Countenance, that when the Officers came to apprehend him, *\* they went backward and fell to the ground* ; how unconceivably greater must it be when his design shall be to manifest that Glory to the World which he then concealed from it ? If in the short time of his transfiguration on the Holy Mount, his own Disciples were so far from being able to behold the glory of his presence, that † *they fell on their faces and*  
 † Matth. 17. 2, 6. *were sore afraid* ; how shall his enemies abide the day of his wrath, or Mark 9. 6. how can they stand when he shall appear in the full glory of his Majesty and Power ?

3. The terrour of the proceedings upon that day : for then *we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*, not for any ostentation of his greatness and power before the whole world, but that *every one may receive according to the things done in his body, whether it be good or bad*. How full of *terrou*r will the proceedings of that day be, wherein all secrets shall be disclosed, all actions examined, and all persons judged ?  
 || Rom. 2. 5. That will be || *the day of the Revelation of the righteous judgment of God* ; this is the time of darkness, and therefore of disputes and quarrels ; but then the wisdom and justice of divine providence shall be made manifest to all, *For every one shall receive according to his work* : and none will wonder at the sentence when they have seen the evidence. Then the most secret impurities, the most subtile Hypocrisie, the most artificial Fraud, and the most dissembled Malice shall be laid open to publick view.  
 \* 1 Cor. 4. 5. For then *\* God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts*. Then all the intrigues of lust and ambition so much the talk and business of this world, will be nothing but mens shame and reproach in the next. With what horrou'r will they then behold all the sins of their lives set in order before them, when they seemed in this life, next to the committing them, to design as much as may be to forget them ? Happy men ! if their Consciences were like their Table-Books, that they could blot out and put in what they pleased themselves : Then all the black Catalogue of their sins would be presently expunged, and they would have nothing to be seen there, but the Characters of what at least seemed to be good. For tho' men be never so vicious they neither care that others should think so of them, nor they of themselves : of all things they do not love to dispute where they cannot answer, and that is their case in all their retorts of Conscience upon them. They know there is no drolling with so sour a piece, as that within them is, for that makes the smartest and most cutting repartees ; which are uneasy to bear, but impossible to answer. Therefore they study their own quiet, by seeking to keep that silent ; and since they never hope to make conscience dumb, they would have it sleep as much as may be : and although the starts it sometimes makes, shew that the most sleepy sinners have some troublesome dreams, yet if it doth not throughly awake in this world, it will do it with a vengeance in another. Then there will be no Musick and Dancing which  
 can

can cure the biting of this *Tarantula* within; no *Opium* of stupidity or Atheism will be able to give one minutes rest. How will men then curse themselves for their own folly in being so easily tempted; and all those who laid traps and snares to betray them by? what different apprehensions of sin will they have then, from what they have now, while they are beset with temptations to it? O, will a forsaken sinner then say, had I ever believed as I ought to have done, that this would have been the fruit of a sinful life, I should have taken more care to prevent this misery than I have done! but O the folly of intemperance, the mischief of ambition, the rage of lust, the unsatiableness of covetousness, the madness of debauchery, and the dulness of Atheism, what have ye now brought me to, with all your pleasures and promises and flatteries while I lost my soul in your service! O that I had time to grow wise again; and once more to try whether I could withstand the cheats and witchcraft of a deceitful world! Now all my sins are as fresh before me, as if committed yesterday, and their burden is heavier than the weight of mountains however light I made of them then; I need no judge to condemn me but mine own Conscience; O that I could as easily see an end of my misery, as I do that I have deserved that there should be none. Thus shall the Book of Conscience be opened at that day in the heart of every impenitent sinner, wherein like *Ezekiels* roul he finds written within and without, \* *Lamentation and Mourning and Woe.* <sup>Ezek.</sup> Yet this will not be the only terrour in the proceedings of that day, <sup>2. 10.</sup> that all the sins that ever wicked men committed will be set in order before them with their several circumstances and aggravations, although the remembrance of them cannot be without extreme horreur and amazement; but that they must undergo a strict and severe examination of all their actions by a most powerful, holy and just Judge. And if it be so troublesome a thing to them in this world to go down into themselves, or to call to remembrance their own wicked actions which they have loved and delighted in; what will it be when they must all be brought forth before the judgment seat of Christ who hates and abhors them? If men can so hardly endure to have the deformity of their vices represented to them though very imperfectly here, how will they bear the dissecting and laying them open in the view of the whole World? When the smallest fibres and the most subtile threads in our hearts shall be curiously examined, and the influence they have had upon our actions fully discovered. When sins that have been despised for their littleness, or unregarded for their frequency, or laughed at as no sins at all, shall appear to have had a greater venom in them, than men would imagine. What shall they think then of their great and presumptuous sins; whereby they have not only offered violence to God and his Laws, but to the dictates of their own Consciences in committing them? Never think that length of time will abate the severity of the enquiry, or lessen the displeasure of God against thee for them. Remember the case of *Amalek*, how God dealt with that people in this World for a sin committed 400 years before, and then think whether God be not in earnest, when he tells us how much he hates sin; and how severe he will be in the punishment of it? *I remember, saith God, † what Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly de-* <sup>† 1 Sam. 15. 2, 3.</sup> *stroy all that they have and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, &c.* What? a whole nation to be destroyed for

one sin, and for a sin they thought to be none at all who committed it, and for a sin at so great a distance of time from the commission of it? But I forbear. I know not whether there be such another instance of God's severity in Scripture, but it is such as may justly make us cry out with the Psalmist, \* *If thou Lord shouldst thus mark iniquities, O Lord who shall stand?* But although God in this world so seldom shews his severity, and tempers it with so much kindness, we have no reason to expect he should do so in another. For here he hath declared that † *mercy rejoiceth against judgment.* This being the time || *of Gods patience and forbearance and goodness towards sinners being not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*; but if men will despise the riches of his goodness, if they will still abuse his patience, if they will trample under foot the means of their own salvation, then they shall to their unspeakable sorrow find, that there is a day of wrath to come, wherein their own dreadful experience will tell them; \* *that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* For that will be a day of justice without mercy, a day of vengeance without pity, a day of execution without any further patience. Then no vain excuses will be taken, whereby men seek to palliate their sins and give ease to their minds now. It will be to no purpose to charge thy wilful sins upon the infirmity of thy nature, the power of temptation, the subtilty of the Devil, the allurements of company, the common practice of the World, the corruption of the age, the badness of education, the folly of youth; all these and such like excuses will be too weak to be made then, when it shall appear to thy eternal confusion, that thy own vicious inclination swayed thee beyond them all. Then there will be as little place for intreaties, as for vain excuses; God shews his great pity and indulgence to mankind now, that he is so ready to hear the prayers and grant the desires of all penitent sinners, but for those who stop their ears to all his instructions, and will not hearken to the reproofs of his word or the rebukes of their own consciences, but contemn all sober Counsels and scoff at Religion; what can they expect from him, but that † *when they shall call upon him he will not answer, and when they seek him earnestly they shall not find him; but he will laugh at their calamity and mock when their fear cometh.* O blessed Jesus! didst thou weep over an incorrigible people in the days of thy flesh, || and wilt thou laugh at their miseries when thou comest to judge the World? didst thou shed thy precious blood to save them, and wilt thou mock at their destruction? didst thou woe and intreat and beseech sinners to be reconciled, and wilt thou not hear them when in the anguish of their souls, they cry unto thee? See then the mighty difference between Christ's coming as a Saviour and as a Judge, between the day of our salvation and the day of his wrath, between the joy in Heaven at the conversion of penitent sinners, and at the confusion of the impenitent and unreclaimable. How terrible is the representation of God's wrath in the style of the Prophets, when he punisheth a people in this world for their sins? It is called, \* *the day of the Lord, cruel with wrath and fierce anger: the day of the Lord's vengeance, † the great and dreadful day of the Lord.* If it were thus, when his wrath was kindled but a little, when mercy was mixed with his severity, what will it be, when he shall stir up all his wrath, and the heavens and the earth shall shake that never did offend him? What shall they then do that shall to their sorrow know how much they have displeased him? Then neither power,

\* Psal.  
103. 3.

† James  
2. 13.

|| Rom. 2.

4.  
2 Pet. 3.9.

\* Heb. 10.

31.

† Prov.

1. 25, 26.

27.

|| Luke 19.

41.

\* Isa. 13.

9, 34, 9.

† Mal. 4.5.

Joel 2. 31.



power, nor wit, nor eloquence, nor craft shall stand men in any stead, for the great Judge of that day can neither be over-awed by power, nor over-reached by wit, nor moved by eloquence, nor betrayed by craft, but every man shall receive according to his deeds. The mighty disturbers of mankind, who have been called *Conquerours*, shall not then be attended with their great armies, but must stand alone to receive their sentence: the greatest wits of the world will then find that a sincere honest heart will avail them more than the deepest reach of the greatest subtilty; the most eloquent persons without true goodness will be like the man in the parable without the wedding garment, speech-<sup>Matt. 22.</sup>less; the most crafty and politick, will then see, that though they may <sup>12.</sup>deceive men and themselves too, yet *God will not be mocked, for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he reap*; and they who have spread snares for others and been hugely pleased to see them caught by them, shall then be convinced that they have laid the greatest of all for themselves; for *\* God will then be fully known by the judgment which he shall execute,* <sup>\* Psa. 9.</sup> *and the wicked shall be snared in the work of their own hands: for, the* <sup>16, 17.</sup> *wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God.*

4. The terrour of the sentence, which shall then be passed. That the Judge himself hath told us before-hand what it shall be, to make us more apprehensive of it in this State, wherein we are capable to prevent it by sincere repentance and a holy life. The tenour of it is expressed in those dreadful words, *† depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* <sup>† Matt. 25.</sup> It is impossible to conceive words fuller of horreur and amazement than those are, to such as duly consider the importance of them. It is true indeed, wicked men in this world are so little apprehensive of the misery of *departing from God*, that they are ready to bid God depart from them, and place no mean part of their felicity in keeping themselves at a distance from him. The true reason of which is, that while they pursue their lusts, the thoughts of God are disquieting to them; as no man that robs his neighbour loves to think of the Judge while he does it, not as though his condition were securer by it, but when men are not wise enough to prevent a danger, they are so great fools to count it their wisdom not to think of it. But therein lies a great part of the misery of another world, that men shall not be able to cheat and abuse themselves with false notions, and shews of happiness. The clouds they have embraced for Deities shall then vanish into smoke; all the satisfaction they ever imagined in their lusts shall be wholly gone, and nothing but the sad remembrance of them left behind to torment them. All the Philosophy in the world will never make men to understand their true happiness so much, as one hours experience of another State will do: all men shall know better, but some shall be more happy and others more miserable by it. The righteous shall not only see God, but know what the seeing of God means; and that the greatest happiness we are capable of is implied therein; and the wicked shall not only be bid to depart from him, but shall then find that the highest misery imaginable is comprehended in it. It is a great instance of the weakness of our capacities here, that our discourses concerning the happiness and misery of a future life, are like those of Children about affairs of State, which they represent to themselves in a way agreeable to their own Childish fancies; thence the Poetical dreams of *Elysian fields*, and turning wheels, and rouling stones, and such like imaginations. Nay, the Scripture it

self sets forth the joys and torments of another world in a way more suited to our fancy than our understanding; thence we read of *sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*, to represent the happiness of that State, and of *a gnawing worm*, and a *devouring fire*, and *blackness of darkness* to set forth the misery of it. But as the happiness of Heaven doth infinitely exceed the most lofty metaphors of Scripture, so doth the misery of Hell the most dreadful representation that can be made of it. Although a worm gnawing our entrails, and a fire consuming our outward parts be very sensible and moving metaphors, yet they cannot fully express the anguish and torment of the soul, which must be so much greater, as it is more active and sensible, than our bodies can be. Take a man that afflicts himself under the sense of some intolerable disgrace, or calamity befallen him; or that is oppressed with the guilt of some horrid wickedness, or sunk into the depth of despair; the Agonies and Torments of his mind may make us apprehend the nature of that misery although he falls short of the degrees of it. And were this misery to be of no long continuance, yet the terrour of it must needs be great, but when *the worm shall never dye*, and *the fire shall never be quenched*, when insupportable misery shall be everlasting, nothing can then be added to the terrour of it: and this is as plainly contained in the sentence of wicked men, as any thing else is. But here men think they may justly *plead with God and talk with him of his judgments*; what proportion, say they, is there *between the sins of this short life and the eternal misery of another*? which objection is not so great in it self as it appears to be by the weak answers which have been made to it; when to assign a proportion, they have made a strange kind of infinity in sin, either from the object, which unavoidably makes all sins equal, or from the wish of a sinner that he might have an eternity to sin in, which is to make the justice of God's punishments to be not according to their works, but to their wishes; But we need not strain things so much beyond what they will bear to vindicate God's Justice in this matter. It is not thought just and reasonable among men, for a man to be confined to perpetual imprisonment for a fault he was not half an hour in committing? Nay do not all the Laws of the World make death the punishment of some crimes, which may be very suddenly done? And what is death, but the eternal depriving a man of all the comforts of life? And shall a thing then so constantly practised and universally justified in the world, be thought unreasonable when it is applyed to God? *It is true*, may some say, *if annihilation were all that was meant by eternal death, there could be no exception against it*: but I ask, whether it would be unjust for the Laws of men to take away the lives of offenders in case their souls survive their bodies, and they be for ever sensible of the loss of life? if not, why shall not God preserve the honour of his Laws, and vindicate his Authority in governing the World, by sentencing obstinate sinners to the greatest misery, though their souls live for ever in the apprehension of it? Especially since God hath declared these things so evidently before-hand, and make them part of his Laws, and set everlasting life on the other side to ballance everlasting misery; and proposed them to a sinner's choice in such a manner, that nothing but contempt of God and his Grace, and wilful impenitency can ever betray men into this dreadful State of eternal destruction.

2. Thus much for the Argument used by the Apostle, *the terrour of the Lord*; I now come to the assurance he expresseth of the truth of it;

Knowing

*Knowing therefore the terrour of the Lord we perswade men.* We have two ways of proving Articles of Faith, such as this concerning Christ's coming to judgment is:

1. By shewing, that there is nothing unreasonable in the belief of them.

2. That there is sufficient evidence of the truth and certainty of them.

In the former of these it is of excellent use to produce the common apprehensions of mankind as to a future judgment, and the several arguments insisted on to that purpose; for if this were an unreasonable thing to believe; how come men without Revelation to agree about it as a thing very just and reasonable? If the conflagration of the world were an impossible thing, how came it to be so anciently received by the eldest and wisest Philosophers? How came it to be maintained by those two Sects which were St. Paul's enemies, when he preached at Athens, and always enemies to each other, the \* *Epicureans* and the *Stoicks*? \* Act. 17. It is true they made these conflagrations to be periodical and not final: 18.

but we do not establish the belief of our doctrine upon their assertion, but from thence shew that it is a most unreasonable thing to reject that as impossible to be done, which they assert hath been and may be often done. But for the truth and certainty of our Doctrine, we build that upon no less a foundation than the word of God himself. We may think a judgment to come reasonable in general upon the consideration of the goodness and wisdom and justice of God; but all that depends upon this supposition, that God doth govern the World by Laws and not by Power, but since God himself hath declared it who is the Supreme Judge of the World, † *that he will bring every work into judgment whether it be good or evil*, since the Son of God made this so great a part of his Doctrine with all the circumstances of his own coming again for this end; since he opened the commission he received from the Father for this purpose when he was upon earth, by declaring, that † *the Father had committed all judgment to the Son, and that the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation*. Since this was so great a part of the Apostles doctrine to preach of this judgment to come, and \* *that God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance to all men in that he hath raised him from the dead*: No wonder the Apostle speaks here with so great assurance of it, *knowing therefore, &c.* And no persons can have the least ground to question it, but such who wholly reject the Christian doctrine upon the pretences of infidelity, which are so vain and trifling, that, were not their lusts stronger than their arguments, men of wit would be ashamed to produce them; and did not mens passions oversway their judgments, it would be too much honour to them to confute them. But every Sermon is not intended for the conversion of Turks and Infidels, my design is to speak to those who acknowledge themselves to be *Christians*, and to believe the truth of this Doctrine upon the Authority of those divine persons who were particularly sent by God to reveal it to the World! And so I come to the last particular by way application of the former, *viz.*

3. The efficacy of this argument for the perswading men to a reformation of heart and life; *knowing the terrour of the Lord we perswade men.*

For as another Apostle reasons from the same argument, † *Seeing all these things* † 2 Pet. 3. 11.

*things shall be dissolved what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?* There is great variety of arguments in the Christian Religion to persuade men to holiness, but none more sensible and moving to the generality of Mankind than this. Especially considering these two things;

1. That if this argument doth not persuade men, there is no reason to expect any other should.

2. That the condition of such persons is desperate, who cannot by any arguments be persuaded to leave off their sins.

1. There is no reason to expect any other argument should persuade men if this of the terrour of the Lord do it not. If an almighty power cannot awaken us, if infinite justice cannot affright us, if a judgment to come cannot make us tremble, and eternal misery leave no impression upon us, what other arguments or methods can we imagine would reclaim us from our sins? We have been too sad an instance our selves, of the ineffectualness of other means of amendment by the mercies and judgments of this present life: have ever any people had a greater mixture of both these, than we have had in the compass of a few years? If the wisest persons in the world had been to have set down beforehand the method of reforming a sinful nation, they could have pitched upon none more effectual than what we have shewed not to be so. First, they would have imagined, that after enduring many miseries and hardships, when they were almost quite sunk under despair, if God should give them a sudden and unexpected deliverance, meer ingenuity and thankfulness would make them afraid to displease a God of so much kindness. But if so great a flash of joy and prosperity instead of that should make them grow wanton and extravagant, what course then so likely to reclaim them, as a series of smart and severe judgments one upon another, which might sufficiently warn yet not totally destroy. These we have had experience of, and of worse than all these, *viz.* that we are not amended by them. For are the Laws of God less broken, or the duties of Religion less contemned and despised after all these? What vices have been forsaken, what lusts have men been reclaimed from, nay what one sort of sin hath been less in fashion than before? Nay, have not their number as well as their aggravation, increased among us? Is our zeal for our established Religion greater? Is our faith more firm and settled, our devotion more constant, our Church less in danger of either of the opposite factions than ever it was? Nay is it not rather like a neck of land between two rough and boisterous seas, which rise and swell, and by the breaches they make in upon us, threaten an inundation? By all which we see what necessity there is that God shall govern this World by the considerations of another, that when neither judgments nor mercies can make men better in this life, judgment without mercy should be their portion in another. O the infatuating power of sin! when neither the pity of an indulgent Father, nor the frowns of a severe Judge can draw us from it: when neither the bitter passion of the Son of God for our sins, nor his threatening to come again to take vengeance upon us for them, can make us hate and abhor them: when neither the shame nor contempt, the diseases and reproaches which follow sin in this World, nor the intolerable anguish and misery of another can make men sensible of the folly of them so as to forsake them. Could we but represent to our minds that State wherein we must all shortly be, when the bustle and hurry, the pleasures and diversions, the courtships

courtships and entertainments of this World shall be quite at an end with us, and every one must give an account of himself to God; what another opinion of these things should we have in our minds, with what abhorrency we should look upon every temptation to sin, how should we loath the sight of those who either betrayed us into sin or flattered us when we had committed it? Could men but ask themselves that reasonable question, why they will defie God by violating his known Laws, unless they be sure he either cannot or will not punish them for it? they would be more afraid of doing it than they are, for supposing both, to do it, is perfect madness: to question his power who is Almighty, or his will who hath declared it and is immutable, is the height of folly.

2. The condition of such is desperate whom no arguments can perswade to leave their sins. For there can be no breaking prison in that other State, no escaping tryal, no corrupting the Judge, no reversing the sentence, no pardon after judgment, no reprieve from punishment, no abatement or end of misery. How canst thou then hope, O impenitent sinner, either to fly from or to endure that wrath of God that is coming swiftly upon thee to arrest thee by death, and convey thee to thy tormenting prison? canst thou hope, that God will discharge thee before that dreadful day comes, when he hath confined thee thither in order to it? Canst thou hope that day will never come which the vindication of God's Justice, the honour of Christ, the happiness of the blessed, as well as the punishment of the wicked make so necessary that it should come? or canst thou hope to defend thy self against an all-seeing eye, a most righteous Judge and an accusing conscience when that day doth come? when all the mercies thou hast abused, the judgments thou hast slighted, the motions of grace thou hast resisted, the checks of conscience thou hast stifled, and the sins of all kinds thou hast committed, shall rise up in judgment to condemn thee? O that we had all the wisdom to consider of these things in time, that the Terror of the Lord may perswade us to break off all our sins by a sincere repentance, and to live so that we may dye with comfort, and be for ever with the Lord in his eternal Joy.

S E R-

# SERMON XII.

Preached at

## WHITE-HALL,

February 18. 1672.

MATTHEW XVI. 26.

*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole World and lose his own soul? or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?*

**I**F we look into the twenty fourth verse of this Chapter we shall find our Saviour there laying down such hard conditions of mens being his Disciples, as were, to all appearance, more likely to have driven away those which he had already, then to have drawn any others after him: For he requires no less than the greatest readiness to suffer for his sake, and that to no meaner a degree than the loss of what is most precious to men in this world, in their lives, which is implied in those words; *If any man will come after me let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me*: If our Saviour had only designed to have made himself great by the number of his followers, if he had intended a Kingdom in this world, as the Jews imagined, he would have made more easie conditions of being his Disciples; He would have chosen another way to have attained his end, and made use of more pleasing and popular arguments to have perswaded the people to follow him. When the Eastern Impostor afterwards began to set up for a new Religion, he took a method as contrary to our Saviours as his Religion and design was: he knew the Greatness and Honour, the pleasures and the pomp of this World, were the things most passionately loved and admired by the generality of mankind; and therefore he fitted his Religion to the natural inclinations of men, and proposed such means of advancing it as were most like to make men great by undertaking them. And men are never so willing to be cheated by any Religion, as that which complies with their present interests and gratifies their sensual inclinations. In this case there need not many arguments to court persons to embrace that which they were so strongly inclined to before; and the very name of Religion does them great service when it allows what they most desire, and makes them sin with a quiet Conscience.

But that is the peculiar honour of Christianity, that as it can never be suspected to be a design for this world, so it hath risen and spread

it self by ways directly contrary to the Splendor and Greatness of it: For it overcame by sufferings, increased by persecutions, and prevailed in the world by the patience and self-denial of its followers. He that was the first Preacher of it, was the greatest example of suffering himself; and he bids his Disciples not to think much of following their Lord and Saviour though it were *to take up the Cross* and lay down their lives for his sake. We may easily imagine how much startled and surprized his Disciples were at such discourses as these, who being possessed with the common opinion of the temporal Kingdom of the Messias, came to him with great expectations of honour and advancement by him; and no less would content some of them, than being his highest Favourites and Ministers of State, *sitting at his right hand, and at his left hand in his Kingdom*: they had already in their imaginations shared the preferments and dignities of his Kingdom among themselves; and were often contending about preheminance, *who should be the greatest among them*. Inasmuch, that when Christ now, the time of his sufferings approaching, began more plainly to discourse to them of *his own sufferings* at Hierusalem, v. 21. St. Peter, either out of his natural forwardness and heat, or being elevated by the good opinion which our Lord had expressed of him before, v. 17. takes upon him very solemnly to rebuke him for ever thinking to submit himself to so mean a condition; *Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee*, v. 22. upon which, Jesus not only reproves Peter with great smartness and severity, as favouring more of the pomp and ease of the World, than of the nature and design of his Kingdom; v. 23. but takes this occasion to tell his Disciples, that they must no longer dream of the Glories and Splendor of this World, nor entertain themselves with vain Fancies of the Pleasures and contentments of this life; but if they would shew themselves to be truly his Disciples they must prepare for Persecutions and Martyrdoms, they must value their Religion above their lives; for the time was now coming on, they must part with one or the other; and if they were not prepared before-hand by self-denial and taking up the Cross, they would run great hazard of losing their souls for the love of this World: and therefore our Saviour shews,

1. The great advantage that would accrue to them, if they were willing to suffer for his sake. *Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it*, v. 25. *i. e.* instead of this short and uncertain life, which would spend it self in a little time, he should have one infinitely more valuable; and therefore no exchange could be better made, than that of laying down such a life as this for one of eternal Happiness and Glory; for so our Saviour elsewhere explains it, *He that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal*; St. Joh. 12. 25.

2. The great folly of losing this eternal state of happiness for the preservation of this present life, or the enjoyment of the things of this world: which he first lays down as a certain truth, v. 25. *For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it*, and then discovers the folly of it in the words of the text, by comparing such a mans gain and his loss together, supposing he should obtain the utmost that can be hoped for in this World. *For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

Wherein we may consider these three particulars.

1. The possibility supposed of losing the soul; though a man should gain the whole world.

2. The hazard implied of the loss of the soul for the sake of the gain of the world.

3. The folly expressed of losing the soul, though it be for the gain of the whole world.

1. The possibility supposed of the loss of the soul in another world; For the force of our Saviour's argument depends wholly on the supposition of the certainty of the souls Being in another state; and its capacity of happiness or misery therein. For, setting that aside there can be no argument strong enough to persuade any man to part not only with what he hath or hopes for in this life, but with life it self. He that is so great a Fool to be an Atheist, would yet be much more so to be a Martyr for his opinion. What is there could recompence the loss of life, to a man that believes that there is nothing after it? But supposing there should be a life to come, as it is impossible to give any demonstration to the contrary, what madness would it be, for a man to run himself into the miseries of another world with a design to prove there is none? If all that our Saviour had meant, were only to represent the folly of a person, that would lay down his life for the purchase of an estate, (for so the soul is often taken for the life) that would not have reached the scope and design of his discourse. And no instances can be produced of such a kind of folly, which would be as great as for a man to lose his head for a wager, or to purchase the lease of his life by destroying himself. But supposing this to be a Proverbial speech, yet the folly of losing a man's life for the gain of the whole world is not brought in by our Saviour merely for it self: but as it doth much more represent the unspeakable folly of such who for the love of this world will venture the loss of an eternal life, and enduring all the misery which is consequent upon it. If that man would gain nothing by his bargain but the reputation of a Fool, that for the possession of the whole world for one moment, would be content to be killed in the next; how much greater folly are they guilty of, that for the sake of this World and the preservation of their lives here, expose themselves to all the miseries of another life, which God hath threatned or their souls can undergo? It is such a loss of the soul which is here spoken of, as is consistent with the preservation of this present life; *for whosoever, saith Christ, will save his life shall lose it*; and to those words before, those of the text have a particular reference, and therefore must be understood not of losing this life, but of the loss of the Soul in a future state.

And this loss cannot be understood of the souls annihilation or ceasing to be, as soon as the life is gone; for that being supposed, he would be the happiest man that had the most of this world at his command and enjoyed the greatest pleasure in it. So St. Paul himself determines, that if there were no future state, the Epicureans argument would take place, \* *Let us eat and drink for to morrow we die*: and he reckons those among the most miserable of all mankind who ventured the loss of all that is accounted desirable in this world and of their lives too, if there were not a better life to come. † *For if in this life only we have hope in Christ, saith he, we are of all men the most miserable*. So that the strength of our Saviour's discourse depends upon the supposition of the immortality of the soul, and its capacity of being happy or miserable in a future state.

\* 1 Cor.  
15. 32.

† 1 Cor.  
15. 19.



And it is the great commendation of the Christian Religion, that the particular duties required in it are established on the same Foundations that natural Religion is, which are the belief of a Deity and the immortality of the Soul. \* *For he that comes unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him;* which being spoken with a respect to one who for being good was translated out of this world, must refer to the rewards of a future life. And we desire no more than these common principles of Religion to make the most difficult duties of Christianity appear reasonable to mankind. For it is upon the account of this future state of the soul, that it is our most just and necessary care to look after the welfare of our souls in the first place, *to seek the Kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof,* before the concerns of this present life, because a state that endures for ever ought to be preferred before a short and uncertain abode in this World. It is this, which makes it reasonable to please God, though to the displeasing our selves and the crossing our natural inclinations; because eternal happiness and misery depends upon his favour or displeasure. It is this, which obliges men to the greatest care of their actions, because their future state in another world, will be according to their lives here, *for every man shall then receive according to his works.* It is this, which ought to keep men from all fleshly lusts, not merely because they are inconvenient for their bodies, but *because they war against their souls.* It is this, which makes the love of this world so dangerous a thing, because it draws away the hearts and affections of men from things which are above and fixes them upon things below. It is this, which make it necessary for us to subdue our passions, to conquer temptations, to forgive injuries, to be patient under afflictions, and to lay down our lives for Religion, because *there will be a reward for the righteous,* and the happiness of another state will make abundant recompence for all the difficulties of this.

So that in the Gospel the doctrine of the souls immortality is not spoken of as the nice speculation of subtile and contemplative men; nor merely supposed as a foundation of all Religion, but it is interwoven in the substance of it, and adds strength to all its parts. For herein we find the immortality of the soul not barely asserted, nor proved by uncertain arguments, nor depending on the opinion of Philosophers; but delivered with the greatest authority, revealed with the clearest light, and confirmed by the strongest evidence. If any one can make known to mankind the state of souls in another world it must be God himself; if ever it was made known plainly by him it must be in the Gospel, whereby *† life and immortality are brought to light;* if ever any arguments were proper to convince mankind of it, they are such as are contained therein. For it is not barely the resurrection of our Lord, which is a manifest evidence of the truth of the souls subsisting after a real death, but the whole design of his doctrine and the Christian Religion is built upon it. So that if we suppose the immortality of the soul the Christian Religion appears more reasonable by it; but if we suppose the doctrine of Christ to be true there can be no doubt left of the immortality of the soul; and whatever arguments we have to prove the truth of this doctrine by, the same do of necessity prove the certainty of the souls immortality.

I confess many subtile arguments have been used by those who never knew any thing of divine revelation to prove the soul to be of

such a nature, that it was not capable of dying with the body; and some of them such as none of their Adversaries were ever able to answer. For the most common acts of sense are unaccountable in a meer Mechanical way; and after all the attempts of the most witty and industrious men, I despair of ever seeing the powers of meer matter raised to a capacity of performing the lowest acts of perception; and much more of those nobler faculties of memory, understanding and will. But although the arguments from hence are sufficient to justify the belief of the souls immortality to all considering men; yet the far greatest part of mankind was never so; and a matter of so great consequence as this is, ought to be proposed in the most plain, most certain, and most effectual manner.

While these disputes were managed among the Philosophers of old, though those who asserted the immortality of the soul had the better reason of their side; yet their Adversaries spake with greater confidence; and that always bears the greatest sway among injudicious people. And some men are always fond of a reputation for wit by opposing common opinions though never so true and useful: especially when they serve a bad end in it, and do thereby plead for their own impieties. But it cannot be denied, that those who were in the right did likewise give too great advantage to their enemies, partly by their own diffidence and distrust of what they had contended for, partly from the too great niceness and subtilty of their arguments, partly from the ridiculous fopperies which they maintained together with that of the souls immortality, as the transmigration of them into the bodies of Brutes and such like. But the main disadvantage of all to the world was, that the immortality of the soul was rather insisted on as a Principle of Philosophy than of Religion. Some of the best of their arguments were such as made the souls of Brutes immortal as well as those of men; and those could not be imagined to have any great force on the lives of men, which would equally hold for such creatures which were not capable of rewards and punishments in another life. But therein lies the great excellency of the Doctrine of the souls immortality as it is discovered in the Gospel, not only that it comes from him who best understands the nature of souls, but is delivered in such a manner as is most effectual for the reformation of mankind. For the fullest account herein given of it is by the rewards and punishments of another life; and those not Poetically described by Fictions and Romances; but delivered with the plainness of Truth, the gravity of a Law, the severity of a Judge, the authority of a Law-giver, the majesty of a Prince, and the wisdom of a Deity. Wherein the happiness described is such as the most excellent minds think it most desirable; and the misery so great as all that consider it, must think it most intolerable. And both these are set forth with so close a respect to the actions of this life, that every one must expect in another world, according to what he doth in this.

How is it then possible that the doctrine of the souls being in another state, could be recommended with greater advantage to mankind, than it is in the Gospel? and what is there can be imagined to take off the force of this, but the proving an absolute incapacity in the soul of subsisting after death? It is true, indeed in the state of this intimate union and conjunction between the soul and body, they do suffer mutually from each other. But if the souls suffering on the account of the body,

dy, as in diseases of the brain, be sufficient to prove there is no soul ; why may not the bodies suffering on the account of the soul, as in violent passions of the mind, as well prove that there is no body ? It is not enough then to prove that the soul doth in some things suffer from the body ; (for so doth the Child in the Mothers womb from the distempers of its Mother, yet very capable of living when separated from her) but it must be shewed that the soul is not distinct from the body to prove it incapable of being without it.

But on the other side, I shall now shew that there is nothing unreasonable in what the Scripture delivers concerning the immortal state of the Souls of men, as to future rewards and punishments, because there are those things now in them considered as distinct from their bodies, which make them capable of either of them. And those are,

1. That they are capable of pleasure and pain distinct from the body.
2. That they have power of determining their own actions.

1. That the souls of men are capable of pleasure and pain distinct from the pleasure and pain of the body. Where-ever pleasure and pain may be, there must be a capacity of rewards and punishments, for a reward is nothing but the heightning of pleasure, and punishment an increase of pain ; And if there be both these in men of which no account can be given from their bodies, there must be a nobler principle within, which we call the Soul, which is both the cause and the subject of them. We may as easily imagine that a Fox should leave his prey to find out a demonstration in *Euclid*, or a Serpent attempt the squaring of the circle in the dust, or all the Fables of *Esop* to become real Histories, and the Birds and Beasts turn Wits and Politicians, as be able to give an account of those we call pleasures of the mind from the affections of the body: The transport of joy which *Archimedes* was in at the finding out his desired *Problem*, was a more certain evidence of the real pleasures of the mind, than the finding it was of the greatness of his wit. Could we ever think that men who understood themselves would spend so much time in lines, and numbers, and figures, and examining Problems and Demonstrations which depend upon them, if they found not a great delight and satisfaction in the doing of it ? But whence doth this pleasure arise ? not from seeing the figures, or meer drawing the lines, or calculating the numbers, but by deducing the just and necessary consequences of one thing from another ; which would afford no more pleasure to a man without his soul, than a Book of *Geometry* would give to a Herd of Swine. It is the Soul alone which takes pleasure in the search and finding out such Truths, which can have no kind of respect to the Body ; it is that, which can put the Body out of order with its own pleasures, by spending so much time in contemplation as may exhaust the Spirits, abate the vigour of the Body and hasten its decay. And while that droops and sinks under the burden, the Soul may be as vigorous and active in such a consumptive state of the Body as ever it was before ; the understanding as clear, the memory as strong, the entertainments of the mind as great, as if the Body were in perfect health. It is a greater and more manly pleasure, which some men take in searching into the nature of these things in the world than others can take in the most voluptuous enjoyment of them ; the one can only satisfy a brutish appetite, while, it may be, something within is very  
unquiet

unquiet and troublesome ; but the other brings a solid pleasure to the mind without any regret or disturbance from the Body. By this we see, that setting aside the consideration of Religion, the mind of man is capable of such pleasures peculiar to it self, of which no account could be given, if there were not a spiritual and therefore immortal Being within us, not only distinct from the body, but very far above it. But the very capacity of Religion in mankind doth yet further evidence the truth of it. I would fain understand how men ever came to be abused with the notion of Religion, as some men are willing to think they are, if there were not some faculties in them above those of sense and imagination ? For where we find nothing else but these, we see an utter incapacity of any such thing as Religion is ; in some brute creatures we find great subtilty and strange imitations of reason ; but we can find nothing like Religion among them. How should it come to be otherwise among men, if imagination were the highest faculty in man ; since the main principles of Religion are as remote from the power of imagination as may be ? What can be thought more repugnant to all the conceptions we take in by our senses, than the conception of a Deity and the future State of Souls is ? How then come the impressions of these things to sink so deep into humane nature, that all the art and violence in the world can never take them out ? The strongest impressions upon all other Beings are such as are suitable to their natures, how come those in mankind to be such as must be supposed to be not only above but contrary to them if an immortal soul be not granted ? If men had no principle within them beyond that of sense, nothing would have been more easie, than to have shaken off the notion of a Deity and all apprehension of a future State : But this hath been so far from easie, that it is a thing utterly impossible to be done : all the wit and arts, all the malice and cruelty, all the racks and torments that could yet be thought on could not alter mens perswasions of the Christian Religion, much less raze out the Foundations of Natural Religion in the world. But what imaginable account can be given of the joys and pleasures, which the Martyrs of old expressed under the most exquisite torments of their bodies ; if their minds were not of a far nobler and diviner nature than their bodies were ? Although a natural stupidity and dulness of temper may abate the sense of pain, although an obstinate resolution may keep men from complaining of it ; yet, not only to bear the Cross but to embrace it, to be not only patient but pleasant under tortures ; nay to sing with greater joy in the flames than others do when they are heated with wine, doth not only shew that there is something within us capable of pleasure distinct from the Body, but that the pleasures of it may be so great as to swallow up the pains of the body. But I need not have recourse to such great and extraordinary instances, (although sufficiently attested by such who saw and heard them) for every good man hath that inward pleasure in being and doing good, which he would not part with for all the greatest Epicurism in the world. And where there is, or may be so great pleasure, no wonder if there be likewise a sense of pain proportionable to it ; witness those gripes and tortures of Conscience which wicked men undergo from the reflection upon themselves ; when their own evil actions fill them with horror and amazement, when the cruelties they have used to others return with greater violence upon their own minds, when the unlawful pleasures of the body prove the greatest vexation to their souls, and the weight of their

evil actions sink them under despair and the dreadful apprehensions of future misery. These are things we need not search Histories, or cite ancient Authors for; every man's own Conscience will tell him, if he hath not lost all sense of good and evil, that as there is a real pleasure in doing good, there is the greatest inward pain in doing evil. Having thus shewed that the soul of man is capable of pleasure and pain in this present state distinct from the body, it thence follows, that it is capable of rewards and punishments, when it shall be separated from it.

2. That the souls of men have a power of determining their own actions; without which there could be no reasonable account given of the rewards and punishments of another life. Were I to prove liberty in man from the supposition of Religion, I know no argument more plain or more convincing than that which is drawn from the consideration of future rewards and punishments: but being now to prove a capacity of rewards and punishments from the consideration of Liberty, I must make use of other means to do it by. And what can be imagined greater evidence in Beings capable of reflecting upon themselves, than the constant sense and experience of all mankind? Not that all men are agreed in their opinions about these things, (for even herein men shew their liberty, by resisting the clearest evidence to prove it) but that every man finds himself free in the determining his moral actions. And therefore he hath the same reason to believe this, which he hath of his own Being or Understanding. For what other way hath a man to know that he understands himself or any thing else, but the sense of his own mind? and those who go about to persuade men that they think themselves free when they are not, may in the next place persuade them that they think they understand when they do not. Nay, they might hope in the first place to persuade men out of their Understandings, for we are not so competent judges of the more necessary and natural acts, for men understand whether they will or no, as of the more free and voluntary; for in this case every man can when he pleases put a tryal upon himself, and like the confuting the arguments against motion by moving, can shew the folly of all the pleas for fatal necessity by a freedom of action. But if once this natural liberty be taken away, wisdom and folly as well as vice and vertue would be names invented to no purpose; no men can be said to be better or wiser than others, if their actions do not depend on their own choice and consideration, but on a hidden train of causes which its no more in a man's power to hinder than in the earth to hinder the falling of rain upon it. If therefore sense and reason may prevail upon mankind, not to fancy themselves under invisible chains and fetters, of which they can have no evidence or experience; we may thence infer the soul's capacity of rewards and punishments in another life, since happiness and misery are set before them, and it must be their own voluntary choice which brings them to either of them: When either by their own folly they run themselves upon everlasting ruine, or by making use of the assistance of divine grace they become capable of endless Joy. But since men have not only a power of governing themselves, but are capable of doing it by considerations as remote from the things of sense as Heaven is from Earth; it is not conceivable there should be such a power within us, if there were not an immortal soul which is the subject of it. For what is there that hath the shadow of liberty in meer matter? what is there

there of these inferiour creatures that can act by consideration of future things, but only man? Whence comes man to consider but from his reason? or to guide himself by the consideration of future and eternal things, but from an immortal principle within him; which alone can make things at a distance to be as present; can represent to it self the infinite pleasures and unconceivable misery of an eternal state, in such a manner, as to direct the course of this present life in order to the obtaining of the one and avoiding of the other. And thus much concerning the supposition here made of the loss of the soul, and its immortality implied therein.

I come to consider the hazard of losing the Soul for the gain of this world. For although our Saviour puts the utmost supposable case, the better to represent the folly of losing the soul for the sake of the world; yet he doth imply the danger may be as great, although a man's ambition never comes to be so extravagant, as to aim at the possession of the whole world. The whole world can never make amends for the loss of the soul; yet the soul may be lost for a very inconsiderable part of it; although all the wealth and treasures of the *Indies* can never compensate to a man the loss of his life, yet that may be in as great danger of losing upon far easier terms than those are. It is not to be thought that those whom our Saviour speaks to, could ever propose such vast designs to themselves as the Empire of the whole world was; but, he tells them, if that could be supposed, it were far more desirable to save a soul than to gain the world, yet such is the folly of mankind to lose their souls for a very small share of this present world. For the temptations of this world are so many, so great, so pleasing to mankind, and the love of life so natural and so strong, that inconsiderate men will run any hazard of their souls for the gain of one or preservation of the other. The highest instance of this kind is that which our Saviour here intends, when men will make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience to escape the danger of their lives; or with *Judas* will betray their Saviour for some present gain although very far short of that of the whole world. And if I be not much mistaken, it is upon this account that our Saviour

\* Matth.  
19. 23; 24.  
Mark 10.  
24. 25.  
Luke 18.  
24. 25.

† 1 Tim.  
6. 10.

|| 2 Tim.  
4. 10.  
\* James

4. 4.  
† Matt. 6.  
24.

pronounces it so hard \* *for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, because in such difficult times of persecution on the account of Religion as those were, such men would be shrewdly tempted to venture the loss of their souls in another world rather than of their estates in this. For it was the young man's unwillingness to part with his great possessions to follow Christ, which gave him occasion to utter that hard saying. It is on this account St. Paul saith, † *the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*. It was on this account, || *that Demas forsook Paul, having loved this present world*: and that \* *the friendship of this world is said to be enmity with God*; and that our Saviour saith † *no man can serve two Masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other; else he will hold to the one and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and Mammon*. Which doth suppose that these two doth require two contrary things at the same time; for if a hundred Masters did all require the same thing, a man might, in doing that, be said to serve them all. But when Religion requires that we must part with all for that, and the world requires that we must part with Religion to preserve our interest in it, then it is impossible to serve God and Mammon together; for we must hold to the one and despise the other.

But

But what then? Is there no danger of the loss of the soul for the sake of this world; but only in the case of persecution? then, some may say, *we hope there is no fear now of mens being too rich to go to Heaven.* Thanks be to God that we live in times free from such dangerous tryals as those of persecution are, and wherein men may quietly enjoy their Estates, and the best Religion in the world together: but although there be no danger of splitting upon the rocks; there may be of sinking with being overcharged or springing too great a leak within us, whereby we let in more than we can be able to bear. And supposing the most prosperous and easie condition men can fancy to themselves here; yet the things of this world are so great occasions of evil, so great hindrances of good, that on these accounts men always run a mighty hazard of their souls for the sake of this world. The devil knew well enough where his greatest strength lay, when he reserved the \* temptation of † Matt: 4, 8, 9. the glories of this world to the last place in dealing with Christ himself; when nothing else could prevail upon him, he was yet in hopes that the Greatness and Splendor of this world would bring him to his terms. And surely if the Devil had not a mighty opinion of the power of these charms of *the Kingdoms and Glory of this World*, he would never have put such hard terms to them which were no less than *falling down and worshipping him*: which we do not find he ever durst so much as mention before till he held this bait in his hand. And although our Saviour baffled him in this his strongest temptation, yet he still finds, that far less than what he here offered, will bring men in subjection to him. How small a matter of gain will tempt some men to all the sins of lying; of fraud and injustice? who pawn their souls and put them out at interest for a very small present advantage, although they are sure in a very little time to lose both their Interest and the Principal too.

How many, for the sake of the Honours and Preferments of this World, are willing to do by their Consciences as the *Indian* did by his Letter, lay them aside till their business be done and then expect to hear no more of them! What poor trifling things in this World, do men continually venture their Souls for? As though all were clear gains which they could put off so dead a commodity as the Salvation of their Souls for. How apt are such to applaud themselves for their own skill, when meerly by a little swearing, and lying, and cheating, things which cost them nothing but a few words, they can defeat the designs of their Enemies and compass their own! But how low is the rate of Souls fallen in the esteem of such persons as these are! If they had not been of any greater value, they had not been worth any ordinary man's, much less, the Son of God's laying down his life for the redemption of them. Is this all the requital men make him for the travail of his Soul, the wounds of his Body, the bitterness of his Passion, to squander away those Souls upon any trifling advantages of this world, which he shed his most precious blood for the redemption of? Whenever men are tempted to sin with the hopes of gain, let them but consider how much they undervalue not only their own Souls, but the eternal Son of God, and all that he hath done and suffered for the sake of the Souls of men: If there had been no greater worth in our Souls, silver and gold would have been a sufficient price of redemption for them (for if men lose their Souls for these things, it is a sign they set a higher value upon them.) But God's justice was not to be bribed, his wrath against sin was not to be appeased by the greatest riches of this World, nothing but the inestimable

blood of Christ would be accepted for the purchase of Souls; and when they are so dearly bought must they be cast away upon such trifles as the riches and honours of this World are, in comparison with them?

These are men who lose their own Souls upon design, but there are others so prodigal of them, that they can play and sport them away, or lose them only because it is the custom to do so. With whom all the reasons and arguments in the world cannot prevail to leave off their sins, if it once be accounted a fashion to commit them. Yea, so dangerous things are fashionable vices; that some will seem to be worse than they are, (although few continue long Hypocritical in that way) that they might not be out of the fashion, and some will be sure to follow it (if not out-do it) though to the eternal ruine of their Souls. But although all damn'd persons at the great day will be confounded and ashamed, yet none will be more ridiculously miserable than such who go to Hell for fashion-sake. What a strange account would this be at the dreadful day of judgment for any to plead for themselves, that they knew that chastity, temperance, sobriety and devotion were things more pleasing to God, but it was grown a Mode to be vicious, and they had rather be damned than be out of the fashion? The most charitable opinion we can have of such persons now, is, that they do not think they have any Souls at all; for it is prodigious folly for men to believe they have Souls that are immortal, and yet be so regardless of them.

Yet these who are vicious out of compliance are not the only persons who shew so little care of their Souls, what shall we say to those who enjoying the good things of this life, scarce ever do so much as think of another? Who are very solicitous about every little mode of attire for their bodies, and think no time long enough to be spent in the grand affairs of dressing and adorning their out-sides; but from one end of the year to the other never spend one serious thought about eternity, or the future state of their Souls. Their utmost contrivances are how to pass away their days with the greatest ease and pleasure to themselves; and never consider what will become of their Souls when they come to die. Alas poor immortal souls! are they become the only contemptible things men have about them? All care is little enough with some for the body, for the pampering and indulging of that, and making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof; but any care is thought too much for the soul; and no time passes so heavily away, as the hours of devotion do. The very shew of Religion is looked on as a burden, what then do they think of the practice of it? The Devil himself shews a greater esteem of the souls of men, than such persons do; for he hath been always very active and industrious in seeking their ruine, but is ready enough to comply with all the inclinations of the body, or mens designs in this world; nay he makes the greatest use of these as the most powerful temptations for the ruin of their souls; by all which it is evident, that, being our greatest enemy, he aims only at the ruin of that which is of greatest value and consideration, and that is the thing so much despised by wicked men, *viz.* the soul. These do in effect, tell the Devil he may spare his pains in tempting them; they can do his work fast enough themselves; and destroy their own souls without any help from him. And if all men were so bent upon their own ruin, the Devil would have so little to do, that he must find out some other employment besides that of tempting to divert himself with, unless it be  
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the greatest diversion of all to him, to see men turned Devils to themselves. But are the temptations of this world so infatuating that no reason or consideration can bring men to any care of or regard to their souls? we have no ground to think so, since there have been and I hope still are such, who can despise the glittering vanities, the riches and honours; the pleasures and delights of this world when they stand in competition with the eternal happiness of their souls in a better world. And that not out of a sullen humour or a morose temper, or a discontented mind; but from the most prudent weighing and balancing the gain of this world and the loss of the soul together. *For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?*

3. Which is the last particular, to represent the folly of losing the soul, though it were for the gain of the whole world. Which will appear by comparing the gain and the loss with each other in these Four things.

1. The gain here proposed is at the best but possible to one; but the hazard of losing the soul is certain to all. And what folly is it for men to run themselves upon so great and certain danger, for so uncertain gain, which never any man yet attained to, or is like to do it? our Saviour knew how hard a matter it was to set any bounds to the ambitious thoughts or the covetous designs of Men: every step the ambitious man takes higher gives him the fairer prospect before him; it raises his thoughts, enlarges his desires, puts new projects into his mind, which like the circles of water spread still farther and farther, till his honour and he be both laid in the dust together: The covetous person is never satisfied with what he enjoys, the more he gets, still the more he hopes for; and like the grave whither he is going, is always devouring and always craving: Yet neither of these can be thought so vain as to propose no less to themselves than the Empire or Riches of the whole world. But our Saviour allows them the utmost that ever can be supposed as to mens designs for this world; let men be never so ambitious or covetous, they could desire no more than all the World; though they would have all this, yet this all would never make amends for the loss of the Soul. It is a thing possible, that one person might by degrees bring the whole world in subjection to him, but it is possible in so remote a degree that no man in his wits can be thought to design it. How small a part of the inhabited world have the greatest Conquerors been able to subdue! and if the *Macedonian* Prince was ever so vain to weep that he had no more worlds to conquer, he gave others a just occasion to laugh at so much Ignorance which made him think he had conquered this. And to put a check to such a troublesome ambition of disturbing the world in others, how early was he taken away in the midst of his vast thoughts and designs? What a small thing would the compass of the whole earth appear to one that should behold it at the distance of the fixed stars? and the mighty Empires which have made the greatest noise in the world have taken up but an inconsiderable part of the whole earth. What are then those mean designs which men continually hazard their souls for as much as if they aimed at the whole world? For we are not to imagine that only Kings and Princes are in any hazard of losing their souls for the sake of this world; for it is not the greatness of mens condition; but their immoderate love to the world which ruins and destroys their souls. And

Covetousness and Ambition do not always reign in Courts and Palaces; they can stoop to the meanness of a Cottage; and ruine the souls of such as want the things of this World as well as those that enjoy them. So that no state or condition of men is exempt from the hazard of losing the soul for the love of this world, although but one person can be supposed at once to have the possession of the whole World.

2. The gain of this World brings but an imaginary happiness, - but the loss of the soul a most real misery. It is easie to suppose a person to have the whole world at his command and not himself; and how can that man be happy that is not at his own command? The cares of Government in a small part of the earth are so great and troublesome that by the consent of Mankind the managers of it are invested with more than ordinary privileges by way of recompence for them; but what are these to the sollicitous thoughts, the continual fears, the restless employments, the uninterrupted troubles which must attend the gain of the whole World? So that after all the success of such a mans designs, he may be farther off from any true contentment than he was at the beginning of them. And in that respect mens conditions seem to be brought to a greater equality in the world, because those who enjoy the most of the world do oft-times enjoy the least of themselves; which hath made some great Emperours lay down their Crowns and Scepters to enjoy themselves in the retirements of a Cloyster or a Garden. All the real happiness of this world lies in a contented mind, and that we plainly see doth not depend upon mens outward circumstances; for some men may be much farther from it in a higher condition in this world, than others are, or it may be themselves have been, in a far lower. But if mens happiness did arise from any thing without them, that must be always agreeable to their outward condition; but we find great difference as to mens contentment in equal circumstances, and many times much greater in a private state of life, than in the most publick capacity. By which it appears, that whatever looks like happiness in this world, depends upon a mans soul, and not upon the gain of the world; nay it is only from thence that ever men are able to abuse themselves with false notions and *Idea's* of happiness here. But none of those shall go into another world with them; farewell then to all imaginary happiness; to the pleasures of sin, and the cheats of a deceitful world; then nothing but the dreadful apprehensions of its own misery shall possess that soul which shall then too late discern its folly, and lament it when it is past recovery. Then the Torments of the mind shall never be imputed to melancholy vapours, or a disordered fancy. There will be no drinking away sorrows, no jesting with the sting of conscience, no playing with the flames of another world. God will then no longer be mocked by wicked men, but they shall find to their own eternal horror and confusion, that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* He neither wants power to inflict, nor justice to execute, nor vengeance to pursue, nor wrath to punish; but his power is irresistible, his justice inflexible, and his wrath is insupportable. Consider now O foolish sinner that hast hitherto been ready to cast away thy soul upon the pleasures of sin for a season, what a wise exchange thou wilt make of a poor imaginary happiness for a most real and intollerable misery. What will all the gain of this world signifie in that State whither we are all hastening apace? What contentment will it be to thee then to think of all those bewitching vanities, which have betrayed

betrayed thy soul into unspeakable misery? Wouldest thou be willing to be treated with all the ceremonies of State and Greatness for an hour or two, if thou wert sure that immediately after thou must undergo the most exquisite tortures and be racked and tormented to death? When men neglect their souls and cast them away upon the sinful pleasures and gains of this world, it is but such a kind of airy and fantastical happiness; but the miseries of a lost soul are infinitely beyond the racks and torments of the body. It hath sometimes happened that the horror of despair hath seized upon mens minds for some notorious crimes in this life; which hath given no rest either to body or mind, but the violence of the inward pains have forced them to put an end to this miserable life; as in the case of *Judas*. But if the expectation of future misery be so dreadful, what must the enduring of it be? Of all the ways of dying we can hardly imagine any more painful or full of horror than that of sacrificing their Children to *Moloch* was among the *Canaanites*, and Children of *Ammon*, where the Children were put into the Body of a Brass Image and a fire made under it, which by degrees with lamentable shrieks and cryings roasted them to death; yet this above all others in the New Testament is chosen as the fittest representation of the miseries of another world, and thence the very name of *Gehenna* is taken. But as the joys of Heaven will far surpass all the pleasure which the mind of a good man hath in this life; so will the torments of Hell as much exceed the greatest miseries of this world.

But in the most exquisite pains of the body there is that satisfaction still left, that death will at last put an end to them; but that is a farther discovery of the unspeakable folly of losing the soul for the sake of this world, that

3. The happiness of this world can last but for a little time, but the misery of the soul will have no end. Suppose a man had all the world at his command, and enjoyed as much satisfaction in it as it was possible for humane nature to have; yet the very thoughts of dying and leaving all in a short time, must needs make his happiness seem much less considerable to him. And every wise man would provide most for that State wherein he is sure to continue longest. The shortness of life makes the pleasures of it less desirable, and the miseries less dreadful: but an endless State makes every thing of moment which belongs to it. Where there is variety and liberty of change, there is no necessity of any long deliberation before-hand, but for that which is to continue always the same the greatest consideration is needful, because the very continuance of some things is apt to bring weariness and satiety with it. If a man were bound for his whole lifetime to converse only with one person without so much as seeing any other, he would desire time and use his best judgment in the choice of him. If one were bound to lie in the same posture without any motion but for a month together, how would he employ his wits before-hand to make it as easie and tolerable as might be? Thus solicitous and careful would men be for any thing that was to continue the same although but for a short time here: But what are those things to the endless duration of a soul in misery, that is a perpetual destruction, and everlasting death; always intolerable, and yet must always be endured. A misery that must last when time it self shall be no more; and the utmost periods we can imagine fall infinitely short of the continuance of it. O the unfathomable Abyss of Eternity! how  
are

are our imaginations lost in the conceptions of it! But what will it then be to be swallowed up in an Abyfs of misery and eternity together? And I do not know how such an eternal State of misery could have been represented in Scripture in words more Emphatical than it is; not only by *everlasting fire*, and *everlasting destruction*, but by *a worm that never dies*, and *a fire that never goes out*; and the very same expressions are used concerning the eternal State of the blessed and the damned; so that if there were any reason to question the one, there would be the same to question the other also.

4. The loss of this world may be abundantly recompenced, but the loss of the Soul can never be. *For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* If a man runs the hazard of losing all that is valuable or desirable in this world for the sake of his Soul, heaven and eternal happiness will make him infinite amends for it. He will have no cause to repent of his bargain that parts with his share in this evil world for the joys and glories that are above. They who have done this in the resolution of their minds, have before-hand had so great satisfaction in it, \* *that they have gloried in tribulations, and rejoiced in hopes of the glory of God*; they have upon casting up their accounts found, † *that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed*; because the afflictions they meet with here are *but light and momentary*, but that which they expected in recompence for them, ‖ *was an exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*. O blessed change! what life can be so desirable as the parting with it is on such terms as these; it was the hopes of this glorious recompence which inspired so many Martyrs to adventure for Heaven with so much courage, patience, and constancy in the primitive times of the Christian Church. How do they look down from Heaven and despise all the vanities of this World in comparison with what they enjoy! And if they are sensible of what is done on earth, with what pity do they behold us miserable creatures, that for the sake of the honours, pleasures, or riches of this World venture the loss of all which they enjoy and thereby of their Souls too! Which is a loss so great, that no recompence can ever be made for it, no price of redemption can ever be accepted for the delivery of it. For even the Son of God himself who laid down his life for the redemption of Souls, shall then come from heaven with flaming fire to take vengeance of all those who so much despise the blood he hath shed for them, the warnings he hath given to them, the Spirit he hath promised them, the reward he is ready to bestow upon them, as in spite of all to cast away those precious and immortal Souls which he hath so dearly bought with his own blood.

Methinks the consideration of these things might serve to awaken our security, to cure our stupidity, to check our immoderate love of this world, and inflame our desires of a better. Wherein can we shew our selves men more than by having the greatest regard to that which makes us men? which is our souls. Wherein can we shew our selves Christians better than by abstaining from all those hurtful lusts which war against our souls, and doing those things which tend to make them happy? We are all walking upon the shore of eternity, and for all that we know the next tide may sweep us away; shall we only sport and play, or gather cockle-shells and lay them in heaps like Children, till we are snatched away past all recovery? It is no such easie matter to prevent

Serm. XII. not comparable to the loss of the Soul. 175

vent the losing our souls as secure sinners are apt to imagine. It was certainly to very little purpose that we are bid \* to work out our Salvation, if lying still would do it; or † to give all diligence about it, if none would serve the turn: || or to strive to enter in at the straight gate, if it were so wide to receive all sinners. No: \* Many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able: what then shall become of those that run as far from it as they can? Those, I mean, whom no intreaties of God himself, no kindness of his Son, no not the laying down his life for their souls, no checks or rebukes of their own consciences can hinder from doing those things which do without a speedy and sincere repentance exclude men from the Kingdom of Heaven. O that men could at last be perswaded to understand themselves and set a just value upon their immortal souls! How would they then despise the vanities, conquer the temptations, and break through the difficulties of this present world, and by that means fit their souls for the eternal enjoyment of that blessed State of Souls which God the Father hath promised, his Son hath purchased, and the Holy Ghost hath confirmed. To whom be rendered, &c.

\* Phil. 2.  
12.  
† 2 Pet.  
1. 10.  
|| Matth.  
7. 14.  
\* Luke  
15. 24.

S E R-

# SERMON XIII.

## THE REFORMATION JUSTIFY'D.

Preached at

# Guild-Hall Chapel

Septemb. 21. 1673.

ACTS XXIV. 14.

*But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresie, so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Propbets.*

**I**N the Beginning of this Chapter we find *St. Paul* brought to his Tryal before *Felix the Roman Governour*, wherein (if we only except the unfitness of the Judge) all other things concurred, which could make such an action considerable, *viz.* the greatness of the cause, the quality of the persons, and the skill which was shewed in the management of it. The cause was not common and ordinary, such as were wont to be tryed before the Governours of Provinces, but of an unusual and publick nature; not a question of words and names, as Gallio thought it, but a matter of the highest importance to the World: which being managed by *St. Paul*, with that zeal and industry, which was agreeable to it, gave occasion to his malicious Country-men to accuse him before the *Roman Governour*, as one guilty of Faction and Sediti-  
 on. Under this colour, they hoped easily to gain the Governour's good will to their design; being a person that more regarded the quiet of his Province, than all the concernments of Truth and Religion. But that this design might be carried on with the greater pomp and shew of Justice and Piety, they do not commit the care of it to the rage of the People, or some furious Zealots; but the High Priest and some members of the Sanhedrin go down on purpose from Hierusalem to Casarea, and carry with them one of their most eloquent Advocates called *Tertullus* to manage the Accusation against *Paul*. Who was no sooner called forth, but the Orator begins to shew his art, by a flattering insinuation,

Act. 18. 15.

Ver. 1.

nation; which is most apt to prevail with men of mean and corrupt minds; *Seeing that by thee, saith he, we enjoy great quietness, and that* Ver. 2, 3.  
*very worthy deeds are done unto this Nation by thy providence; we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness:* Having thus prepared his Judge, he presently falls upon the matter, and charges *St. Paul* with being a pestilent and seditious person, a disturber of his Ver. 5, 6.  
 Nation in all parts, a prophaner of the Temple; but the main point of all, and in which the rest were comprehended, was, that *he was a ring-leader of the Sect of the Nazarenes.* (So the Christians were then called among the Jews, from our Saviour's abode in the Town of *Nazareth*) But although the Writer of this History gives us only the short heads of his accusation; yet we may easily suppose by *St. Paul's* answer, that he insisted more largely on this, than on any of the rest: representing to *Felix*, "That when the Jewish Church had been at first established by  
 " God himself under Laws of his own making, when he had so settled  
 " the several orders and degrees of men among them, that *the Priests* Mal. 2. 7.  
 " *lips were to preserve knowledge, and the Law to be sought at their*  
 " *mouths;* when under this Government, their Religion had been pre-  
 " served for many hundreds of years, and after many Revolutions they  
 " enjoyed one common and publick Worship among them, though  
 " there were several distinct Orders of Religious men (such as the *Pha-*  
 " *risees* and *Essenes*) yet all agreed in the same Divine Worship; but  
 " now at last to their great regret and horror, appears one *Jesus of Na-*  
 " *zareth*, a person of obscure Parentage and mean Education, who pre-  
 " tended to discover many corruptions in the Doctrine and Practices of  
 " our best men; and without any Authority from the High Priest or  
 " *Sanhedrin* he gathered Disciples, and drew multitudes of people after  
 " him; till at last the wisdom of our Governours thought it fit to take  
 " him off, and make him an example for *Reformers*; notwithstanding  
 " this, his bold and forward Disciples after his death carried on the same  
 " design, pretending that *the time of Reformation was come*; and accord- Heb. 9. 10.  
 " ingly have formed themselves into a Sect, vigorous and active, of  
 " high pretences, and dangerous designs, which if it continues and in-  
 " creases, can end in nothing short of the ruine of our *ancient Jewish*  
 " *Catholick Church*; which hath had so constant and visible a Succession  
 " in all Ages; that hath had so many Martyrs and Confessors in it; so  
 " many Devout and Religious Persons as the *Pharisees* are; so excellent  
 " an Order and Government, so much unity and peace before this new  
 " Sect of *Nazarenes* arose in opposition to that Authority with which  
 " God had invested the High Priest and Rulers of the People. And a-  
 " mong all the promoters of this *new Sect*, there is none more factious  
 " and busie than this *Paul* whom *we* here accuse; and *whom some of our*  
 " *Nation found in the Temple prophaning of it*, and there we would present-  
 " ly, out of meer zeal to our Religion, have taken and destroyed; but  
 " he was violently rescued out of our hands, and sent hither to be  
 " tryed; and these things, which I have spoken, is the sense of all  
 " those who are come down as witnesses; for so we read, v. 9. *And*  
 " *the Jews also assented, and said, that these things were so.* *St. Paul* be-  
 " ing thus accused, and having leave given him to answer for himself, was Ver. 16.  
 so far from being daunted by the greatness of his enemies, or the vehemency of their accusation, that he tells the Governour, that he did *with*  
*all cheerfulness* undertake his defence: and there being two parts of his  
 accusation, 1. His tumultuous and prophane carriage in the Temple;

this he utterly denies, *v. 11, 12, 13.* and plainly tells them, they can never prove it against him. 2. But as to the other and main part of the Charge, his being a *ringleader of the Sect of the Nazarenes*; although he would not, out of his great modesty, take upon himself to be one of the Heads or Chiefs among them, yet as to the owning of that way, notwithstanding all the imputations they had cast upon it, he doth it with the greatest freedom and courage in the presence of his Judge and Accusers; and not only so, but defends himself therein, that he had done nothing contrary to the Laws of God, or the most ancient Religion of his Country: all which particulars are contained in the words of the Text; *But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresie, so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets.*

Wherein we have these three things considerable.

1. The Imputation which Christianity suffered under in its first appearance: *After the way, which they call heresie.*

2. The Way taken by St. Paul to remove this false Imputation; *viz.* by appeal to Scripture and Antiquity; *So Worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things that are written in the Law and the Prophets.*

3. The Courage of St. Paul in so freely owning his Religion in the presence of his greatest enemies, and when they were in hopes to destroy him for it: *This I confess unto thee, that after the way, &c.*

1. I begin with the false Imputation which Christianity suffered under at its first appearance; *After the way, which is called heresie*; the same Word which is translated *Sect*, *v. 5.* and although the Word be indifferent in it self, yet where it is taken for a combination of men together against an established Religion and lawful Authority (as it was by the Jews when they charged the Christians under this name) then it implies in it a twofold accusation: 1. Of Novelty and Singularity. 2. Of Faction and Sedition.

1. Of Novelty. A Sect or Heresie in this sence implies in it, mens setting up with a new Doctrine which was not heard of before; and making that the Foundation of a new Society separate and distinct from the established Church, and consequently they must charge the Church they are divided from with errors and corruptions, or they make themselves guilty of Schism, *i. e.* unnecessary separation. Now upon these two grounds the Jews laid the imputation of a *New Sect* upon the *Nazarenes* or *Christians*, 1. Because they could not shew a visible succession in all Ages: 2. Because they could not prove the Jewish Church to be guilty of such errors and corruptions as to need a Reformation.

1. They could not shew a Succession in all Ages of such persons who agreed in all things with them. "For where (say they) were the men  
"to be found in former Ages, that taxed the Jewish Church with  
"such errors and corruptions as *Jesus of Nazareth* did? that bid men  
"beware of the leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees, *i. e.* of the most learn-  
"ed and holy men? Had not God always a Visible Church among them?  
"they could produce the names of their High Priests in every Age,  
"and shew them all the marks of a Visible Church? For *in Judah* was  
"God known, and his Name was great in Israel. Hath not God said,  
"that in his House at Hierusalem he would put his Name for ever; and  
"his eyes and his heart should be there perpetually? How is it then possible  
"but there must be a constant and visible Succession in all Ages? since  
"God would always have a people to dwell among; and that might  
"be

Pfal. 76. 1.

Deut. 12. 11.

2 Kings

21. 7.

2 Chron.

7. 16.



“ be known to be his people by the outward marks and signs of a true  
 “ Church. But if the Christians pretences held good, God must for  
 “ several Ages have wanted a Church among them. For none of those  
 “ things which they charged the Jews with, were newly crept in a-  
 “ mong them, but had been delivered down to them by the Tradition  
 “ of their Fore-fathers, in an uninterrupted manner, as they thought,  
 “ from the very time of *Moses*. This was their Rule whereby they  
 “ guided themselves in their actions of Religion, and in the sense of ob-  
 “ scure places of the Law and the Prophets; and in that time after the  
 “ cessation of Prophecy, when the Christians supposed these corrup-  
 “ tions to have come in among them, they could draw down a con-  
 “ stant Succession from *the men of the great Synagogue*, of persons eminent  
 “ for Learning and Piety that never charged them with any such cor-  
 “ ruptions as *Jesus of Nazareth* and his Disciples did. Would God e-  
 “ ver suffer such dangerous errors, hypocrisie, and superstitions to pre-  
 “ vail in his own Church, and raise up no persons to discover these  
 “ things, till these new Teachers and Reformers arose? Were not  
 “ *Hillel* and *Shammai* that so accurately discussed all the niceties of the  
 “ Law, able to find out such gross and open corruptions, if any such  
 “ had been among us? Might not we say, *That not only the Teachers,*  
 “ *but God himself had slept all that time,* if he raised up no one Person  
 “ to discover the coming in of such errors and corruptions? Where  
 “ had God then any true Church in the World, if not among his peo-  
 “ ple of the Jews? And would he suffer that to be overspread with  
 “ such a Leprosie, and send none of his Priests to discover it? And e-  
 “ ven by the confession of the Christians themselves, they were once  
 “ the beloved and chosen people of God, how or when was it that  
 “ they ceased to be so? Do not themselves acknowledge, that they re-  
 “ ceive the Law and the Prophets from our hands? And that *to us were*  
 “ *committed the Oracles of God, and to us pertained the adoption, and the*  
 “ *glory, and the Covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of*  
 “ *God, and the Promises, and that ours are the Fathers?* How is it then  
 “ possible after all these privileges, to suppose this Church to fall  
 “ into such a degeneracy, as at last to be cast off by God, and a new  
 “ Church arise out of the ashes of it? Thus we may reasonably sup-  
 “ pose the Jews to have argued for themselves; and on the other side,  
 “ they trampled upon and despised this new Sect of the *Nazarenes*, “ That  
 “ had nothing of the Pomp and Splendour of their Church; they had  
 “ only a company of mean and illiterate persons at first to joyn with  
 “ them; the Disciples of their Master were a sort of poor Fishermen  
 “ and inconsiderable persons, men of no Authority, or reputation for  
 “ extraordinary Sanctity or Learning: even their Master himself was  
 “ one of no great severity of life, that did not retire from the world,  
 “ and lead an abstracted life, but conversed with Publicans and Sinners,  
 “ and put not his Disciples upon Fasting and long Prayers; whereas  
 “ the Pharisees were men of great austerity and mortification, much ex-  
 “ exercised in devotion, making frequent and long prayers, at certain  
 “ hours; and in whatever place those hours took them. Now how  
 “ is it possible to believe, that such devout persons as these are mistaken,  
 “ and the Sect of the *Nazarenes* only in the right? But besides all this,  
 “ Where was their Church before *Jesus of Nazareth*? We offer to pro-  
 “ duce a personal succession on our side, that joyned in constant com-  
 “ munion with us at the Temple at *Hierusalem*; let the Christians shew

*v. Beh. de  
 not. Eccles.  
 l. 4. c. 5.  
 S. præsere d.*

*Rom. 3. 2.  
 2. 4. 5.*

“ any number of men before themselves, that joyned with them in believing what they do, and rejecting the abuses which they tax among us. If they cannot do this, let them then suffer under the just imputation of Novelty.

2. “ But supposing they do not think it necessary to assign a number of men distinct from our Society, but say *it is enough that though they joyned with them in the Worship of God, yet they did not in their Corruptions*: yet to vindicate themselves, they must shew how it was possible for such corruptions to come in, and no more notice be taken of them: Such things could not be introduced without some notable alteration; and in such a one, the author, the time, the place, the manner may be assigned: We can tell, say they, all these circumstances in the Idolatries of *Jeroboam, Ahab, and Manasseh*; if so great alterations have happened in the state of our Church, that there is a necessity of reforming it; name us the persons, the time, the place, the manner how all these corruptions came in. When came men first to forsake the letter of the *Scripture*, and adhere to *Tradition*? Who first brought in the *Pharisaical* Superstitions? What was his name, where was his abode, who first opposed and condemned him? Were all men asleep then to suffer such alterations, and to say nothing at all against them? What, could one Generation conspire to deceive the next? and if not, how could such changes happen in matters of Religion, and no one take care to discover it and prevent the infecting of posterity by it? Had no persons any regard to God and the purity of Religion then? If they had, would they suffer strange fire to come upon God's Altar, and take no notice at all of it? Why did not *Jesus of Nazareth*, when he so frequently and vehemently declaimed against the *Pharisaical* hypocrisie and superstitions, and false Doctrines, shew to the people, when, and where, and how these things came into the Church of God? He only condemns them, and speaks sharply against them, saith not one word to satisfie the *Scientifical* men among them, how it was possible for corruptions to come in, and prevail to such a degree, and yet no circumstances of time or place be assignable of it. Thus the Jews still believed themselves to be the only *true, ancient, visibible, Catholick and Infallible Church of God*, and despised the poor *Christians*, as a novel and upstart *Seēt of Nazarenes*; which is the first imputation the Christians suffered under.

2. They suffered under the imputation of *Faction and Sedition*; which is the second thing implied in the name of *Seēt* or *Hereſe* here mentioned, and that they charged upon them two ways. 1. For not submitting to the Churches Authority. 2. For disturbing the peace and quiet of the People.

1. For *not submitting to the Churches Authority*: not, that the Disciples of our Lord did out of humour, or fancy, or only to make a party, break with the Jews in matters meerly of order and indifferency: no, on the contrary we find them extremely cautious of giving any offence in such matters, which temper they learnt of their *Lord and Master*, who complied with many things, that others might not take advantage by his omission of them, to slight and contemn them; thus when others were baptized of *John*, he would be so too; not, that he had any need of washing away of sin: but he would not make use of a particular privilege to bring any discountenance upon a general duty. Thus we see, he went up at the solemn *Feasts* to *Hierusalem* as others did;

did; and not only was present in the *Temple*, but vindicated by a Miracle the order and decency of it, by *driving out the buyers and sellers* Mat. 21. 12. from the outward parts of it, although they had a fair pretence of being ready at hand to serve the necessities of such as were to sacrifice to God in the Temple; nay St. *Mark* tells us, *that he would not suffer* Mar. 11. 16. *any vessel to be carried through the Temple*: and this he did not upon any reason peculiar to the *Levitical Law*, but because it was a *House of Prayer*. And this example his Apostles followed, who after they had the *Holy Ghost* poured upon them, yet they attended the Temple at the hours of Prayer. But most remarkable to this purpose, is the instance of St. *Paul* at that very time when he was seized upon, and like to be destroyed by the fury of the Jews. For understanding at *Hiernusalem* Acts 21. from St. *James*, *that there were many thousands of believing Jews that were still zealous of the Law*, and were informed that St. *Paul* among the *Gentiles* slighted *Circumcision and the Levitical Customs*; he, to give them all reasonable satisfaction that he intended to make no unnecessary breach among them about indifferent matters, submits himself to a legal purification in the Temple for seven days together; before the end of which, Ver. 7. the Jews made a tumult and seized upon him, and so he was brought to answer the accusations against him in this Chapter. Thus careful St. *Paul* was to give no ground for suspicion that he delighted in disorders and separations; this example he did leave to all prudent Christians, rather to submit to things which they have no great value for (as no doubt at this time St. *Paul* had very little for the *Levitical Customs*) than to hazard the breaking the peace of the Church for such matters. But notwithstanding all this care of the first Christians, they could not avoid the imputation of *Faction*; because they would not entirely submit their judgments to the Authority of the Jewish Church. For this was the great pretence they stood upon, that they were the *Governours* of the Church by *God's own institution*, that they were to explain and interpret the *Law and the Prophets*; and this was expressed in the beginning of their Law, *That in all cases of difficulty they were to go up to* Deut. 17. *the place which the Lord their God should chuse; and to go to the Priests,* 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. *and the Levites, and to the Judge, and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment. And thou shalt do according to the sentence which they of that place (which the Lord shall chuse) shall shew thee, and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee; and the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken to the Priest, (that standeth to minister there before the Lord thy God) or unto the Judge, even that man shall die, and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel.* Upon this place they might certainly much better establish the infallibility of their own Church, than others draw an argument for infallibility in the Christian Church from it. However, absolute obedience would serve their turn, to charge the Christians with *Faction*, in not submitting to their Authority. “ For “ was not this a matter of difficulty, whether the *Messias* were to be a “ temporal Prince or not? concerning what time, and place, and per- “ son the Prophecies were to be understood? Who were the competent “ Judges in this case, but those whom God had established by his Law? “ If the Scribes and Pharisees were charged with false glosses, and cor- “ rupting the Law by their Traditions, the Christians were not to take “ upon themselves to judge of them; but to appeal to the High Priest “ and the *Sanhedrin*, who were the only lawful Judges in these matters. “ Their duty was submission and patience; but by no means ought “ they

" they upon their own Authority to begin a new Church, and to broach  
 " new Doctrines directly contrary to the judgment of the High Priest  
 " and *Sanhedrin*: yea, after they had pronounced Sentence against  
 " *Jesus of Nazareth*, and condemned him to death; and excommuni-  
 " cated his followers, and punished as many as they could get into  
 " their power; what could it (in their opinion) be but the Spirit of  
 " Faction and Disobedience thus to oppose the Authority of their  
 " Church, in believing contrary to its decrees, and reforming without  
 " any power derived from it? we see in our Saviour's time how severe-  
 ly they check'd any of the people who spake favourably of Christ and  
 his Doctrine; as though the poor ignorant people were fit to judge of  
 these matters! to understand Prophecies, and to know the true Messias,  
 when he should appear! And therefore when some of their Officers that  
 had been sent to apprehend him, came back with admiration of him,  
 and said, *Never man spake like this man*; they take them up short and  
 tell them, *They must believe as the Church believes*; what, they take up-  
 on them to judge of such matters! No, they must submit to their Go-  
 vernours. *Have any of the Rulers, or Pharisees believed on him? but this*  
*people which know not the Law are cursed. i. e.* When they set up their  
 own judgment in opposition to the Authority of the Church. And af-  
 ter our Saviour's death at a solemn Council at *Hiernsalem*, when *Peter*  
 and *John* were summoned before them; the first Question they ask'd was,  
*By what power, or by what name have ye done this?* They never en-  
 quired, whether the Miracle were wrought or no, or whether their  
 Doctrine were true; all their question was about their Mission, whether  
 it were ordinary or extraordinary; or what authority they could pre-  
 tend to, that were not sent by themselves; but let the things be never  
 so true, which they said, if they could find any flaw in their Mission ac-  
 cording to their own Rules and Laws, this they thought sufficient ground  
 to forbid them to preach any more, and to charge them with Faction if  
 they disobeyed.

2. They charged the Christians with *Faction* in being *so active and*  
*busie* to promote Christianity to the great disturbance of the Jews in all  
 parts. This *Tertullus* accused *St. Paul* of, *that he was a mover of sedition*  
*among all the Jews throughout the world*; and accordingly the *Jews* at  
*Theffalonica* take the Christians by force and carry them to the *Rulers* of  
 the City, crying, *Those that have turned the world upside down are come*  
*hither also.* This they knew was the most effectual course to render them  
 odious to all Governours, who are apt to suspect all new things as  
 dangerous, and think no truth can compensate the hazard of alterations.  
 Thus it was especially among the *Roman* Governours, who had learnt  
 from the counsel given to *Augustus*, to be particularly jealous of all in-  
 novations in Religion; and had much rather the people should continue  
 quiet under an old error, than have the peace disturbed for the great-  
 est Truth. This was really the greatest difficulty in the way of Chri-  
 stianity; it came no where, but people were possessed beforehand  
 with quite other apprehensions of Religion, than the Christians brought  
 among them. The Jewish and Pagan Religions were in possession in  
 all places, and the people were at ease in the practice of them. What  
 then must the Christians do? Must they let them alone and not endea-  
 vour to convince them of the truth of their own Doctrine? If so, they  
 are unfaithful to their trust, betrayers of truth, and false to the Souls of  
 men: if they go about to perswade men out of their Religion, they  
 know,

know, such is the fondness most men have for their own opinions, especially in Religion, that where they might hope to convince *one*, they might be sure to enrage *many*; especially of those whose interest lay in upholding the old Religion. How little doth Reason signify with most men, where Interest is against it? Truth and Falshood are odd kind of Metaphysical things to them, which they do not care to trouble their heads with; but what makes for or against their Interest, is thought easie and substantial. All other matters are as *Gallio* said, *questions of names and words*, which they care not for; but no men will sooner offer to demonstrate a thing to be false, than they who know it to be against their interest to believe it to be true. This was the case of these great men of the Jews that came down to accuse *Paul*; they easily saw whither this new Religion tended, and if it prevailed among their people, farewell then to all the *Pomp and Splendor* of the *High-Priesthood* at *Hierusalem*; farewell then to the *Glory* of the *Temple* and *City* whither all the Tribes came up to worship thrice a year; farewell then to all the riches, and ease, and pleasure which they enjoyed: And what was the greatest Truth and best Religion in the World to them, in comparison with these? These were sufficient reasons to them to accuse Truth it self of deceiving men, and the most peaceable Doctrine of laying the Foundation of Faction and Sedition. Thus we have considered the false imputations which were cast upon Christianity at first, implied in these words, *After the way which is called Heresie.*

2. I now come to the way taken by *St. Paul* to remove these false imputations, which he doth,

1. By an appeal to Scripture, as the ground and rule of his faith, *Believing all things which are written in the law and the Prophets.*

2. By an appeal to the best and purest Antiquity, as to the object of Worship; *So worship I the God of my Fathers*; not bringing in any new Religion, but restoring it to its primitive purity.

1. *By an appeal to Scripture as the ground and rule of his faith.* The *Jews* pleaded *Possession, Tradition, Authority* of the present Church: against all these, *St. Paul* fixes upon a certain and unmoveable Foundation, *the Law and the Prophets.* He doth not here insist upon any particular revelation made to himself, but offers the whole matter in dispute to be tryed by a common Rule that was allowed on both sides. And his meaning is, if they could prove that he either asserted, or did any thing contrary to *the Law and the Prophets*, then they had some reason to accuse him of innovation, or beginning of a *new Sect*; but if the foundation of his doctrine and practice lay in what themselves acknowledged to be from God, then they had no cause to charge him with introducing a *new Sect* among them.

But the great Question here is, "What ground *St. Paul* had to decline the *Authority of the present Church*? Since God himself had appointed the *Priests* to be Interpreters of the Law; and therefore in doubtful cases resort was to be made to them; and not the judgment left to particular persons about the sense of Scripture: And yet in this case it is apparent *St. Paul* declined all Authority of the present Church; for at that very time the *High-Priest and Elders* came down to accuse him, and he takes not the least notice of their judgment in this matter. I shall therefore now shew that *St. Paul* had very great reason so to do, and to appeal only to *Scripture.*

1. Because the Authority of the present Church was more liable to error and mistake, than the Rule of Scripture was.

2. Because it was liable to more partiality, than that was.

1. Because it was more liable to *error and mistake*, than the Rule of Scripture was. It was agreed on both sides, that the Law was from God, and that *the Prophets spake by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost*; all that was now left was only to find out the true meaning of them, and to compare Prophecies with events. As in the case of the *Messias*; if the circumstances foretold by the *Prophets* had their exact accomplishment in Christ, as might appear to those who carefully compared them; *If he were born at Bethlehem, of the Tribe of Judah, when the Scepter was departed from it, and during the second Temple*, and all other circumstances agreeing; then though the ordinary judgment concerning *true Prophets* belonged to the *Sanhedrin*, yet it was far more reasonable to believe that they were mistaken, than that all the Prophecies should be accomplished in a person that was not the true *Messias*. For those Prophecies were not intended only for the *Priests and Rulers*, but for directions to the People, that they might be able to judge of the accomplishment of them: otherwise when the *Authority* of the *Jewish Church* condemned our *Saviour*, the People could have no reason to believe him to be the *Messias*; if they were bound in the *sense* of Scripture to submit their judgment wholly to the Churches Authority. It is plain then, that the *sense* of Scripture may be so evident to private capacities, that they are not to submit in it to the *present Authority of the Church*. For notwithstanding all the promises made to the *Jewish Church*, and the command of submitting to the sentence of their *Priests and Rulers*, in a matter of the highest concernment, *viz.* concerning the true *Messias*, men were bound to believe directly contrary to the present Authority in the Church. For the people were bound to believe *Christ* to be the *true Messias*; altho' the *High Priest and Elders* had condemned him for a *deceiver and malefactor*. But besides this particular case, there may be several others wherein men may lawfully reject *the Authority of the present Church*; and those are, when that Authority shall go about to overthrow those things which must be supposed antecedent to the belief of any such Authority: as, 1. The common sense of mankind. 2. The force of a divine Law. 3. The liberty of judgment concerning truth and falshood. All these must necessarily be supposed before any Authority of a Church; but if any Church goes about to overthrow these, it thereby forfeits its own Authority over men.

1. If it requires things contrary to common sense; as in that instance wherein some of the *Jewish Rabbies* required submission to their Authority, *viz.* in believing the right hand to be the left, or the left to be the right, if they determined so; or supposing the Jews to have required the people to deny that they ever saw any Miracle wrought by Christ; or in the Miracle of the Loaves, that what they saw and handled, and tasted, to be bread was true bread; or to say, that the same individual body might be in a thousand places at once, or that things whose nature it is to be in another, can subsist without their proper subject; what Church soever requires such things as these from its members to be believed, gives them just reason to reject its Authority.

2. If it requires things contrary to the force and reason of a divine Law: as the Jews themselves would have acknowledged, if any Authority

thority among them had gone about either to have left out the second Commandment, or made it lawfull to give Religious worship to Images, under any distinctions whatsoever: or if the Priests had taken away from the people their share in the sacrifices, under pretence of the *un-sanctified teeth*, or the *long beards* of the Laity, which were not fit to touch what had been offered in sacrifice to God. But we need not put cases among them, for our Saviour therefore bids men *have a care of the leaven of Scribes and Pharisees*, because *by their traditions they made the Commandment of God of none effect*: as in their *Corban*, if they made a vow to God they thought themselves excused from relieving their Parents; and in this way our Saviour generally deals with them, shewing that though they pretended to keep the letter of the Law, yet by their corrupt additions and false glosses they overthrew the scope and design of it: which he thought sufficient reason to reject their Authority; and therefore when he bids his Disciples, *observe and do whatsoever the Scribes and Pharisees bid them*; it must be supposed to be only while they keep to the letter and reason of the Law; for if he had intended an absolute obedience, he would never elsewhere have bid his Disciples *be-ware of their Doctrine*.

Matt. 15. 6.  
16. 6.

Matt. 23. 3.

Mat. 16. 12.

3. If it takes away all liberty of judgment concerning truth and falsehood in Religion. For this is a natural right which every man hath to judge for himself: and they that take this away, may as well command all men to put out their eyes, that they may better follow their Guides. But the other is so much worse because it is an assault upon our understandings, it is a robbing us of the greatest talent God hath committed to our management, it is a rape upon our best faculties, and prostituting them to the lusts of Spiritual Tyrants; it is not *captivating our understandings to the obedience of faith*, but enslaving them to the proud and domineering usurpations of men; wherein they would do by us as the *Philistines* did by *Sampson*, they would put out our eyes, that we might grind in their prison, and make them sport. I would not be mistaken, it is the liberty of judgment I plead for, and not of practice; that may be justly restrained by the laws of the Church, where the other is allowed; because the obligations to peace and unity are different from those to faith and inward assent. And that no absolute submission of judgment could be required by the Law of *Moses*, notwithstanding the command of outward obedience in the cases mention'd, *Deut. 17. 8, 9. &c.* is most evident from hence, because that Law makes provision for a *sin-offering in case the whole Congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the Assembly, or Supream Council, and they have done something against the commandment of the Lord*: which had been a Law made to no purpose, if it had been impossible for their chief Authority to have erred or been mistaken in their judgment. From hence we see *St. Paul* had great reason to appeal from the *High-Priest and Elders to the Law and the Prophets*, because they were subject to error and mistake, but these are not.

Lev. 4. 13.

2. Because *the Law and the Prophets* are less liable to *partiality*, than a living Judge, or the Authority of the present Church. I have oft-times wondred to hear men speak so advantageously of a *living Judge*, before an *infallible Rule*, in order to the end of Controversies. If all they mean be only that *an end be put to them no matter how*, I confess a *living Judge* in that case hath much the advantage, but so would any other way that persons would agree upon, as the judgment of the next per-

son we meet with, or Lottery, or any such thing; but if we would have things fairly examined and heard, and a judgment given according to the merits of the cause, the case will be found very different here from what it is in civil causes. For here the Judge must be a party concerned, when his own Authority and Interest is questioned; and liable to all those passions which men are subject to in their own cases. Which will be notoriously evident in the case before us, between the *High Priest and Elders* on one side, and *St. Paul* on the other: They pleaded, that if any difficulty arose about the sense of the Law, it belonged to them to judge of it; *St. Paul* declines their judgment and appeals only to the *Law and the Prophets*: had it been reasonable in this case for *Felix* to have referred the judgment to them who were the parties so deeply concerned? A living Judge may have a great advantage over a bare Rule to put an end to controversies; but then we must suppose impartiality in him, freedom from prejudice, an excellent judgment, diligence and patience in hearing all the evidence, and at last delivering sentence according to the sense of the Law; if any of these be wanting, the controversy may soon be ended, but on the wrong side. I suppose none of those who would have controversies in Religion ended by a living Judge, will for shame say, they would have them ended right or wrong; but if they would have Truth determined, they must give us assurance, that these Judges shall lay aside all partiality to their own interests, all prejudice against their Adversaries, shall diligently search, and examine, and weigh the evidence on both sides, and then shall determine according to the true sense of the Law. How likely this is, will appear by the living Judges in our Saviour's time; Was there ever greater partiality seen than was in them, or more obstinate prejudice, or more wilfull errors, or a more malicious sentence than came from them in the cause of our Lord and Saviour? They would not believe his Miracles, though told them by those that saw them; when they saw them, they would not believe they came from God, but attributed them to the Devil; they would not so much as enquire the true place of his Nativity, but ran on still with that wilfull mistake, *that he was born in Galilee*; and by this they thought to con-

Job. 7. 52. found *Nicodemus* presently, *Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no Prophet*. If they had searched and looked themselves, they would have found, that Christ was born in *Bethlehem*, and not in *Galilee*. But where men are strongly prejudiced, any thing serves for evidence and demonstration; whereas all the arguments on the other side shall be despised and contemned. How captious were they on all occasions towards our Saviour, lying in wait to entrap him with questions, to pervert his words, and draw blasphemy out of the most innocent expressions? And when none of all these things could do, they use all the ways of fraud, malice, and injustice to destroy the Saviour of the World as a Malefactor and Blasphemer. Was not here now a mighty advantage, which the Authority of the present Church among the Jews of that time had, above the guidance of the Law and the Prophets? And the knowledge *St. Paul* had of the same temper being in them still might justly make him decline their judgment, and appeal only to the *Law and the Prophets*, for the ground and rule of his Faith.

2. For the object of his worship; he appeals to the best Antiquity, I worship the God of my Fathers. i. e. I bring no new Religion among you, but the very same in substance with that which all the Jews have owned;



owned; so some render *τὸ πατρῷον θεῶν*, *Deo Patrio*, the God whom all my Brethren acknowledge, but he rather understands it of the same God that was worshipped by Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, *quem majores nostri coluerunt*; so St. Peter in his preaching to the people concerning the resurrection of Christ, to avoid the imputation of Novelty, saith, *The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our Fathers* Acts 3. 13; *hath glorified his Son Jesus*; and again to the Sanhedrin he saith, *The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus*; and St. Paul, *The God of our Fathers* 5. 30. *hath chosen thee*; in the use of which expressions they purposely declare, 22. 14. that they had no thoughts of bringing in any *new Religion* among them, contrary to what God had of old declared to the Patriarchs. The main things in which the Jews objected innovation to them, did either concern the bringing in some new doctrine, or the reformation of corruptions among them.

1. For their doctrine; that either concerned the *Messias*, or a *future State*. For the doctrine of the *Messias* it was as ancient as the records of any revelation from God were. It was the great promise made to the *Patriarchs* long before the Law of *Moses*; and even *Moses* himself speaks of him, as St. *Steven* proves to them; and *David*, and *Isaiab*, Acts 7. 37. and *Jeremiah*, and *Ezekiel*, and *Daniel*, and *Micah*, and *Malachi*, as the Apostles at large prove in their writings. Why should this then be accounted any new doctrine which they all believed and received? If the Question be only whether Christ were that *Messias* or no; for that, they desire nothing more than the testimony of the *Law and the Prophets*, and the *Miracles* wrought by him; but they had no reason to quarrel with them upon their belief, for such an alteration of the state of things which themselves believed must be when the *Messias* came; for in him not only the Nation of the Jews, but *all the Nations of the earth were to be blessed*; which was inconsistent with supposing the Ceremonial Law to continue in its force and obligation; being particularly suited to one people lying within such a compass as they might three times a year attend upon the service in the Temple at *Hierusalem*. If their quarrel was, concerning a *future state*, as though that were a new Doctrine, St. *Paul* adds in the next Verse, *That themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead both of the just and the unjust*. And in his defence before *Agrippa*, he saith, *And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto* Acts 26. 6; *our Fathers, unto which promise our Twelve Tribes instantly serving God day and night hope to come*. So that the Apostle produces *Antiquity, Universality* and *Consent* in these Fundamental Articles of the Christian Religion; only a late busie and politick Faction of the *Sadducees* opposed this doctrine; but why should their opposition signifie any thing against so full a stream running down from the first and purest *Antiquity*? Thus much for the positive part of their faith and doctrine.

2. For the negative part, or *the reformation of abuses and corruptions* among them; this was St. *Paul's* plea; Let them shew where *the God of our Fathers* imposed any of those heavy burdens which the Scribes and Pharisees place so much of their Religion in. What ground is there *in the Law and the Prophets*, for the Pharisaical Superstitions, and Vows, and Severities to themselves in fetching blood and knocking their heads against the walls, and different garbs and dresses to appear more holy unto men, with many other customs of theirs, the observation of which was made so great a part of the Religion of their devoutest men? And

it is a strange thing they should think it impossible such things should come in among them, without great notice being taken of it; for although sudden and violent changes may have all the circumstances known, yet it is not to be expected in more insensible and gradual alterations. A man may tell when a violent Fever seiz'd upon him and inflamed his blood, but he cannot do so by a Hectick or a Consumption; must he therefore believe himself well, because he cannot tell the punctual time when he fell sick? We may easily describe the circumstances of a Landflood which overflows the banks, and bears all before it, but we cannot do so by the coming in of the Tide, which steals in secretly and insensibly, and no man can assign the place where the salt and fresh water first mix together. Superstition is a Hectick Fever to Religion, it by degrees consumes the vitals of it, but comes on insensibly, and is not easily discovered till it be hard to be cured. At first, it may be some devout but indiscreet men made way for it, who love to find out some Modes of Devotion different from the rest of the World, which are greedily embraced by such who admire and follow them; this example taking, another begins and sets up for a more refined way than the former; and so the design spreads, till at last true piety and goodness be swallowed up by superstitious fopperies. Which is the most probable account of all the Pharisaical corruptions; some of whose observations might be begun at first with a good mind, and by the devout persons of that time; but afterwards, every one that had a sower look and a worse nature than ordinary, thought it not enough to follow the example of others, but like a great *Physician* he must have his *Nostrum's*, something of his own finding out, a new garb, or ceremony, or posture of devotion, whereby he may be taken notice of, and admired for his sanctity. Thus that fardle of superstitious rites was gathered up among the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* in our *Saviour's* time, whom he most severely upon all occasions rebukes for their hypocrisy, in placing so much of their Religion in them. And thus much for the way taken by *St. Paul* to vindicate Christianity from the imputations of being a *new Sect* or *Herese*, by an appeal to *Scripture* and the *best Antiquity*.

3. There remains only, the *freedom and courage* expressed by him in owning his Religion, notwithstanding these false imputations. *But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which is called herese, &c.* He abhorred that mean and base-spirited principle, which makes it lawfull for men to deny their Religion when it brings them into danger; he studied no secret arts of compliance with his Adversaries to secure himself; he did not decline appearing, though to the hazard of his life in so just a cause. He valued his Religion beyond his own safety, and regarded not all the calumnies and reproaches of his enemies, as long as he made this his constant exercise, to keep a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards men. And this he elsewhere saith, afforded him more inward comfort and satisfaction, than all the crafts and policy in the World could give him. *For our rejoicing is this, saith he, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the World.* There is nothing inspires men with so much courage, as integrity and uprightness of mind doth; and such persons who have the comfort of that, have not only better hopes as to another world, but oftentimes escape better as to this, than others do; for

Ver. 16.

2 Cor. 1. 12.

for even their enemies cannot but esteem them: whereas the fawning, sneaking and flattering hypocrite that will do or be any thing for his own advantage, is despised by those he courts, hated by good men, and at last tormented by his own conscience, for being false to God and Religion. But we may see here in *St. Paul* a great instance of true *Christian magnanimity*; he was sensible how great both the malice and quality of his enemies were; he knew he was to answer before a judge, that regarded nothing either of Justice or Religion; yet he neither flatters his Judge, nor betrays any distrust of him: he doth not bespatter his enemies, nor discover any fear of them; but with a modest freedom and manly courage owns the main part of their accusation, and effectually vindicates his own innocency and his Religion together. For even *Felix* himself, although a man otherwise very capable of being wrought upon by some ways of address, of which we read, *Ver. 26.* yet the *High Priest* and the *Elders* with their eloquent *Tertullus* were forced to return as they came, and leave *St. Paul* under the name of a *Prisoner*, but enjoyning the conveniences of *liberty*, *ver. 23.*

I have now gone through all the parts of the Text, with a respect to *St. Paul* and the *Authority* of the *Jewish Church*, which was engaged against him; it may now be justly expected that I make *Application* of what I have said, to our own *State* and *Condition*. Thanks be to God, we are not brought to such a tryal as *St. Paul* was, we enjoy the liberty of speaking for our selves and our Religion, and not only speaking for it, but professing and owning it. And may we ever do so! But we have busie and restless Adversaries abroad, the factors of the *High Priest* and *Elders* at *Rome*, who have as much spight and malice against us, as ever those of *Hierusalem* had against *St. Paul*; and they have their *Tertullus's* too, men of art and insinuation, and who manage their cause against us, just as he did against *St. Paul*, they charge us with bringing in *new Sects* under the pretence of *Reformation*; or with rejecting the *Authority* of the present Church which we were bound to obey, and thereby laying the Foundation of *Faction* and *Schism*. These are heavy charges, but they are no other than those the *High Priest* and the *Elders* made against *St. Paul*; and thanks be to God, his *Defence* and *Vindication* is *ours* too, for we appeal to *Scripture* and the *best* and *purest Antiquity*, and desire to be judged according to these. These three things therefore I shall speak to before I conclude,

1. That the same reasons which they produce against the *Reformation* would have held against the spreading of Christianity at first.

2. That the same *Defence* which *St. Paul* made for Christianity will justify the *Reformation*.

3. That we have all reason to follow the courage of *St. Paul* in owning and defending our Religion, notwithstanding the imputations which are cast upon it.

1. That the same reasons which they produce against the *Reformation* would have held against *Christianity* at first. What have all the clamours of our Adversaries for above a hundred years come to, but the very same which I have already mention'd as the *Jews Objections* against Christianity, *viz. Novelty*, and *Faction*? "Where was your Church before the Reformation? produce your succession in all Ages of persons who agreed in all things with you. Where were those distinct bodies of men who found fault with those corruptions that you pretend to reform? Our Church hath had a constant and glorious

“ rious succession of Bishops, and Martyrs, and Confessors, and religious Orders of Men, Virgins and Widows. But supposing such a distinct succession were not necessary, yet shew how it was possible for so many errors and corruptions to come into the Church, and no one take notice of them and discover them. Where was the watchful eye of Providence over all the Church all this while? What, all the Pastors asleep at once! or all conspiring together to deceive their posterity! Besides, how can the Protestants ever answer their rejecting the Authority of the present Church which they lived under? and to whom God had promised his infallible Spirit? how can they clear themselves from faction and disturbing the peace of the Christian world, which lived in so great unity and peace before? This is the sum of their Objections against the *Reformation*, which are the very same we have mention'd before, as produced by the Jews against Christianity. If the arguments are good now, they were so then; if they were good then, for all that I can see the *High Priest* and *Elders* were in the right, and *St. Paul* in the wrong; if they were not good then, but are now, some remarkable disparity must be shewed between their case and ours; and that must lie in shewing these three things:

1. That the Christian Church hath greater infallibility promised than the Jewish had.

2. That the first Christians had greater reason to reject the Authority of that Church, than the Reformers had, as to the Church of *Rome*.

3. That the Causes of corruptions in the *Jewish Church*, could not hold in the Christian. But if none of these can be made good, then the case will appear to be the very same.

1. It cannot be proved that the *Christian Church* hath greater infallibility promised than the *Jewish* had. Of which we have this plain evidence, that one of the strongest arguments produced for the infallibility of the *Christian Church* is taken from the Promises made to the *Jewish*. How often hath *Deut. 17. 8, 9, 10.* been made use of to prove infallibility in the *Christian Church*? If they had any better arguments in the New Testament, would they ever run so far back to a Command that most evidently relates to the Jewish constitution? Where hath ever God promised that he would dwell in *St. Peter's* at *Rome*, as he did, that he would dwell in his Temple at *Hierusalem*? What boastings and triumphs would there have been, if any such words had been in the *Gospel* concerning *Rome*, as there were of old concerning *Hierusalem*; viz. that God had sanctified it; that his Name might be there for ever; and his eyes and his heart should be there perpetually? What pitifull proofs in comparison of this, are all those brought out of the New Testament for the Authority and Infallibility of the *Roman Church*? What are all the promises of the Spirit made to the Apostles, and remarkably accomplished in them, to this plain promise of God's particular presence in that place for ever? Suppose *St. Peter* had privileges above the rest of the *Apostles*; how comes the entail to be made to all his successors, and only at *Rome* and no where else? Where are the Deeds kept, that contain this gift? Why are they not produced during all this contest? And yet we see in the *Jewish Church* where such a promise was made to a particular place, no such thing as Infallibility was implied in it.

2. It cannot be shewed, that the first *Christians* had greater reason to reject the Authority of the Jewish Church, than our *Reformers* had to reject that of the Church of *Rome*. I know here it will be presently said, *That the Apostles saw the Miracles of Christ, and wrought many themselves, and received an immediate Commission from Jesus Christ in whom the Churches infallibility was then seated.* All which I grant to be true in it self, but cannot be pleaded by them who contend for absolute obedience to the present Churches Authority as infallible. My reason is, because upon this principle they could not believe Christ to be the true *Messias*; for his being the true *Messias* depended upon two things, *viz. the fulfilling of Prophecies, and the truth of his Miracles*; now according to their principles, no man could be certain of either of these without the Authority of the Church; for the fulfilling of Prophecies depended upon the sense of many obscure places of Scripture, about which they say there is a necessity of an infallible Judge; and for Miracles, they tell us, that there is no certain way of judging true and false, but by the Authority of the Church. Now if these things be so, what ground could the first Christians have to believe Christ to be the true *Messias*, when in both these, they must oppose the Authority of the present Church?

3. They can never prove, that the same causes of corruptions do not hold as to the Christian, which did as to the Jewish Church. For the *Christian Church* in those Ages which we charge with introducing the corruptions, was degenerated into greater *Ignorance, Barbarism, Luxury and Superstition*, than the *Jewish Church* in the time of its darkness from the cessation of *Prophecy* till the coming of Christ. Our adversaries themselves confess, that for a long time, there was nothing either of Learning or Humanity among them; nothing but ease, and luxury, and ambition, and all manner of Wickedness among the chief Rulers among them; nay, even at *Rome* there was a succession of fifty of their *High Priests*, so remarkable for their Wickedness, that *Annas and Caiaphas* (setting only aside their condemning Christ) were *Saints* in comparison of them. And is it now any wonder that such errors and corruptions should come into that Church, as those we charge them with? Nay, rather the greatest Wonder seems to be, that any thing of Christianity should be preserved among them. But besides the *sottishness* of those times, we have many other causes to assign of the corruptions introduced among them; as a *Compliance with Gentilism* in many of their Customs and Superstitions; *Affectation of new Modes of Devotion*, among indiscreet *Zealots*; *Ambition* and constant endeavour to advance the Authority and Interests of the Priesthood above all Secular Power; and when for a long time these had been gathering the rude materials together, then the *Morish Philosophy* happening to creep in among them, the *Monks* began to busy themselves therein, and by the help of that, a little better to digest that Mass and Heap of Corruptions, and to spend the wit they had to defend and improve them.

2. But against all these, we stand upon the same defence that *St. Paul* did: we appeal to *Scripture*, and the *best and purest Antiquity*. We pretend to bring in no new Doctrines, and therefore no *Miracles* can be required of us; which the *Apostles* wrought to confirm Christ's being the true *Messias*, who was to alter that *State* which God himself had once appointed: All that we plead for, is that the Religion established by Christ may serve our turn, and that which is recorded by the *Apostles* and

and Evangelists; to these we make our constant appeal, and have the same reason to decline the Authority of the *Roman Church*, that *St. Paul* had as to the *High Priest* and *Elders*, when he appealed to *the Law and the Prophets*: Nay, we have somewhat more reason; because God had once appointed the *High Priests* and *Rulers* of the *People* among them; but the Supremacy of the *Roman Church* was a meer usurpation begun by *Ambition*, advanced by *Forgery*, and defended by *Cruelty*. But we do not only believe all that is written in the *Law and the Prophets*, but we worship the *God of our Fathers*; of the *Fathers of the first and purest Ages of the Christian Church*; we are not only content to make use of their *Authority* in these matters, but we make our appeal to them; and have begged our *Adversaries* ever since the *Reformation*, to prove the points in difference between us, by the testimony of the first six hundred years; but from that time to this, they are as far from proving any one point, as ever they were.

3. What then follows from all this, but that we should imitate *St. Paul's* courage, in owning and defending our Religion, notwithstanding all the false imputations which are cast upon it. What a shame would it be for us, meanly and basely to betray that Cause, for which our *Ancestors* sacrific'd their lives? Is the *Romish Religion* any thing better than it was then? What error in *Doctrine*, or corruption in *Practice* have they ever reformed? Nay, have they not rather established and confirmed them more? Are they any thing kinder to us than they have been? No; notwithstanding all their late pleadings for *Evangelical Peace and Charity*, they can at the same time tell us, *That the Statutes against Hereticks are still in force against us, as condemned Hereticks*; and we are not so dull, not to apprehend the meaning of that; viz. that were it in their power they could lawfully burn us to morrow. And is not this the height of *Evangelical Love and Sweetness*? Who can but admire the perswasiveness of such arguments to *Gospel-meekness*, and melt at the tenderness and bowels of an *Inquisition*? Let us not deceive our selves; it is not the mean compliance of any in going half way towards them, will serve their turn: there is no chewing their Pills, all must be swallowed together, or as good in their opinion to have none at all. For not only plain *Hereticks* but the *favourers* and *suspected of Heresie* are solemnly excommunicated every year in the famous *Bull of Cæna Domini*; and *Lindwood* their *English Canonist*, tells us whom they

Advocate  
of Consci-  
ence-Liber-  
ty p. 236,  
237.

Lindwood  
Provinc. l.  
5. tit. de  
hæret.  
p. 162. 2.

Vertum.  
Rom. p. 104.  
105.

Advoc. for  
Lib. p. 24.

account suspected of *Heresie*, viz. *All that shew common civility to Hereticks, or give Alms to them, or that once bear their Sermons*. This last indeed hath been mitigated by a considerable party among them; for notwithstanding the opposition of the *Jesuits* in this matter, and seven *Breves* obtained by their means from several *Popes* forbidding all *Roman Catholicks* to come to our Churches; yet the *Secular Priests* have contended for it as a thing lawfull for them not only to come to our Prayers, and hear our Sermons, but to partake of our Sacraments too. Which they may allow, while they hope to carry on their interest better that way; but if once, (which God forbid) the Tide should turn with them, then the old *Laws* of their Church must prevail, and nothing will be thought so wholesome as an *Inquisition*. Which it is strange, their *Advocates for Liberty of Conscience*, should call only, *Laws in Catholick Countries against Hereticks, and not Laws of the Church*, when there are extant above a hundred *Bulls* and *Breves* of *Popes* establishing, confirming, and enlarging the *Inquisition*. Since then no favour is to be expected

expected from their Church (for whatever they pretend, all the severity comes from thence, all the favour and mitigation from the clemency and wisdom of Princes) let us endeavour to strengthen our selves, by a hearty zeal for our Religion, and using the best means to confirm and uphold it. And since *the Children of this World are in their Generation wiser than the Children of light*; there are some things practis'd among them, which may deserve our imitation: and those are,

1. A mighty Industry and Zeal in promoting their Cause; they have learn'd of their Predecessors to *compass Sea and Land to gain one Profelyte*. They insinuate themselves into all companies; stick at no pains, accommodate themselves to all humours, and are provided one way or other to gratifie persons of all inclinations; for they have retirement for the melancholy, business for the active, idleness for the lazy, honour for the ambitious, splendour for the vain, severities for the sowe and hardy, and a good dose of pleasures for the soft and voluptuous. It is not their *Way*, but their *Zeal and Industry* I propound to our imitation; I know not how it comes to pass, but so it often happens, that they who are most secure of truth on their side, are most apt to be remiss and careless; and to comfort themselves with some good old sayings, as *God will provide*, and *Truth will prevail*, though they lie still, and do nothing towards it; but certainly such negligence is inexcusable, where the matter is of so great importance, the Adversaries so many, and an account must be given shortly in another world, of what men have done or suffered for their Religion in this.

2. Submission and Obedience to their Spiritual Governours; the greatest strength of that prevailing Faction lies in the close union and cohesion of all the parts together, by a settled subordination of one to another; which though not always effectual, yet the contrivance is so laid, as if there were as much Truth and Reason as Policy in it, cannot be deny'd to be fit for upholding the interest of a Church. But we plead not for their blind and absolute obedience; but sure the Apostles had some meaning when they bid the Christians *obey them that had the rule over them, and submit themselves, for they watched for their souls; and esteem them very highly in love for their Works sake*: not, be ready on all occasions to reproach and contemn them, and be glad of any idle stories wherewith to bespatter them. If men would once understand and practise the duties of humility, modesty, and submission to the Government which God hath set over us, we might have greater hopes to secure the interest of our Church and Religion, than without it we can ever have. For spiritual pride, conceitedness in Religion, and a Spirit of contradiction to Superiours are to be reckoned among some of the worst Symptoms of a declining Church.

3. Lessening of differences among themselves; for although with all their care they cannot prevent them, yet they still endeavour to extenuate them, as much as possible, and boast of their Unity among strangers to their Churches affairs. The great wisdom of the *Court of Rome* lies in this, that as long as persons are true to them in the main points wherein the difference lies, they can let them alone in smaller differences among themselves; and not provoke either of the dissenting parties, unless they are sure to suppress them, lest they give them occasion to withdraw from their communion. They can allow different Rites and Ceremonies in the several Orders of Religion among them, and grant exemptions and privileges in particular cases; as long as they make

them serviceable to their common interest by upholding and strengthening them. Would to God we could at last learn this Wisdom from our enemies, not to widen our own differences by inveterate heats, bitterness and animosities among our selves; but to find out ways whereby even the dissenters in smaller things may be made usefull for the maintaining the common interest of our Church and Religion. And it is a vain thing in any to go about to separate these; or ever to hope that the *Protestant Religion* can be preserved among us without upholding *the Church of England*. For if once that *Bullmark* be demolished, our Adversaries will despise all the lesser *Sconces* and *Pallisado's*: they will be but like *Romulus his Walls*, which they will easily leap over at their pleasure. I pray God then (and I hope you will all joyn with me in it) that he would vouchsafe to our Governours the Spirit of Wisdom and Peace, to find out the most proper means for the establishment of our Church and Religion; and I pray God give us all a Spirit of knowledge to *understand the things which belong to our Peace*, and of Love and Unity to endeavour after them.

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S E R-

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# SERMON XIV.

Preached

Novemb. 5. 1673.

A T

St. Margaret's Westminster,

Before the

Honourable House of Commons.

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St. MATTH. VII. 15, 16.

*Beware of false Prophets, which come to you in Sheeps  
cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening Wolves.  
Ye shall know them by their Fruits.*

**I**F we were to judge of the *nature* of *Christianity* by the designs and practices of some, who would be thought the only *true* and *Catholick Christians*, we should have no great reason to esteem it our honour to be called by his Name, who first brought this Religion into the world. For if the *Christian Religion* did indeed justify all the *fraud* and *treachery*, the *mischief* and *cruelty* which hath been either acted or designed by men under the glorious pretence of advancing the interest of the *Catholick Church*, we might better chuse not to be *Christians*, than to be such *Men*: Because whatever Religion overthrows the common principles and duties of humane nature, such as those of *Civil obedience*, *integrity* and *humanity* are, cannot be supposed a Religion proper or intended by God for Mankind, whose great end in Religion is to improve and rectifie, and not to debauch or corrupt the dispositions of men. Men need no Religion to instruct them in the arts of deceiving, the contrivances of malice, or the methods of revenge; such *fruits* as these spring up too easily in our corrupt and degenerate natures, which need no great force or improvement to bring them forth: But when the warmth of the Sun shall be joyned with the fruitfulness of the Soil, when men are encouraged to pursue their own natural inclinations by the most powerful motives of Religion, what bounds can be set to the growth and increase of these accursed fruits? Of all Religions in the World, we might have thought the Christian least liable to be abused to such ill purposes; for it was one of *Machiavel's* quarrels against *Christi-*

stianity, that by its precepts of meekness and patience, it rendered men unfit for such great undertakings, which could not be accomplished without something of cruelty and inhumanity, whereas the old Religions by the multitude of Sacrifices did inure men to blood and destruction, and so made them fitter for any enterprize. And *Machiavel* was certainly in the right, if Religion were intended only to make men *Butchers*: or to instruct them in the use of Swords and Gun-powder. Nay, the Religion of *Mahomet* is in this respect to be very much preferred before the Christian, for that makes it not only lawfull to destroy those of a different Religion, but enrolls them for Martyrs that die in the Field, and makes the blood of enemies as meritorious, as we do that of the Cross. But that is reserved as the peculiar honour of the Christian Religion, that it commands the subduing all the brutish and savage inclinations of men to acts of revenge and cruelty; that it restores humane nature to it self by its precepts of meekness, mercy, peaceableness, and universal charity; that it advances it to a divine nature by the imitation of God himself, in shewing kindness to enemies, and overcoming evil with good. This is the Religion established by our Lord and Saviour in this excellent Sermon on the Mount, wherein the scope and design of Christianity is delivered with the greatest plainness and perspicuity; which (if it be possible for us to judge of his meaning by the clearest expressions) was far enough from being the setting up a Monarchy in the Church to which all the Kings of the Christian world are by their Baptism bound to vail their Crowns, and lay their Scepters at its feet: or in case they do not, that then this Spiritual Monarch may excommunicate, depose, and deprive Princes of their Government, and dissolve all the obligations between their Subjects and them: and make it lawfull for them to depose them: We find not the least footstep of any thing tending this way, where our Saviour speaks most advantageously concerning the honour of his Disciples; which honour he represents by things which set forth their usefulness in common:

*Matth. 5. 13, 14.* *Ye are the Salt of the Earth, ye are the light of the World;* and not by setting up one above all the rest, *far above all Principalities and Powers,* to whom Kings and Princes, and all People are bound to be subject, if they regard their salvation. If any such thing as this had been so material a part of the Christian Doctrine, as some imagine, if it had been so necessary to salvation, it is somewhat strange, that when our Blessed Saviour gave so many directions in order to Salvation he should give not so much as the least intimation concerning this. And yet he saith;

*Mat. 7. 24.* *at the end of this Sermon, Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, is like unto a wise man that built his house upon a rock;* not *super hanc Petram,* i. e. according to the *Roman Gloss,* upon the Pope's Authority; but upon such a firm foundation as will never fail him. And what is it which our Saviour endeavours to perswade men to, in order to so firm a settlement of their minds against all the assaults of persecutions? *viz.* to humility, meekness, goodness, universal holiness, to the love of God and Mankind, to sincerity in devotion, dependence on Providence, prayer, and doing as we would be done by: this is the substance of the Christian Law delivered by the Son of God; than which nothing can be imagined more contrary to the Spirit of faction and disobedience, of cruelty and revenge, and that covered over with a pretence of zeal for Religion. But he who gave these excellent precepts, did foresee, that there would arise *men who should preach*

preach and prophesie in his Name, and in his Name cast out Devils, and do wonderfull works: that yet for all their fair shews and pretences to the world should be of a temper and disposition directly contrary to the Gospel; and therefore it was necessary for all Christians, as they valued their own welfare, to have an eye to them, lest they should be deceived by them: which is the meaning of our Saviour in these words; *Beware of false Prophets which come to you in Sheeps cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening Wolves: By their fruits ye shall know them.* Wherein we have these two things considerable:

1. The Caution given, *Beware of false Prophets*, together with the ground of that Caution, *For they come to you in Sheeps cloathing, but inwardly are ravening Wolves.*

2. The Rule laid down whereby we are to judge of them: *By their Fruits ye shall know them.*

1. The Caution given, *Beware of false Prophets.* There were two sorts of deceivers our Saviour gives his Disciples particular caution against, viz. *false Christs and false Prophets*; the *false Christs* were those Matth. 24. who pretended that they were the persons who were foretold by the 24. Prophets that should come for the redemption of his People; *for many* Mat. 24. 5. *shall come in my Name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many.* Not as though they pretended to be sent by Christ, but that they would assume to themselves the Dignity and Authority of the true Messias; and of this sort there were many that arose among the Jews, such as *Thendas, Jonathas, Barchoebas*, and many others. But besides these, there were *false Prophets*, some of which did openly oppose Christianity, such as that *Bar-Jesus* mention'd in the *Acts*; but there were others Act. 13 who pretended to own Christianity, and to prophesie in the Name of Christ, whom St. Peter calls *false Teachers*; and whom St. Paul describes Mat. 7. 21. by the same character that our Saviour here doth: *But I know that after my departing shall grievous Wolves enter in among you, not sparing the* 2 Pet. 2. 1. *flock: also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw* Acts 20. *Disciples after them: whom he elsewhere sets forth by their Sheep's* 29, 30. *cloathing; when he saith, that by good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple, whom he calls false Apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ: which carry'd so* Rom. 16. *fair a shew and appearance among the people, that St. Paul was very* 18. *full of jealousy and apprehension concerning them, lest they should by* 2 Cor. 11. *degrees draw away his Disciples from the simplicity of the Gospel of* 13. *Christ. For I am jealous over you, saith he, with godly jealousy; but I* V. 2, 4. *fear, lest by any means as the Serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.* It may seem strange, that after the Apostles had with so much care and diligence planted the Gospel of Christ in several Churches, they should express so much fear as they did, (and especially St. Paul) of their being so soon corrupted by the false Teachers; as he doth, not only of the *Corinthians*, but of the *Galatians* too. *I marvel, saith he, that ye are so* Gal. 1. 6. *soon removed from him that called you into the Grace of Christ.* And O 3. 1. *foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth?* and of the *Ephesians*, *That we henceforth be no more Children tossed to and* Eph. 4. 14. *fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: and of the* Col. 2. 8. *Colossians, Beware lest any man spoil you through Philosophy and vain de-* 18. *ceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the World, and not*  
after

after Christ. And let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary  
 Heb. 13.9. *humility and worshipping of Angels*: and of the Hebrews, *Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines*. But we shall see this great Caution, delivered here first by our Saviour, and afterwards by his Apostles, was no more than necessary, if we consider under what pretences they came, and what Arts and Methods these false Teachers used to delude and seduce the people.

1. They pretended to the same infallible Spirit which the Apostles had. And this may be the reason, why our Saviour doth not here call them *false Teachers*, but *false Prophets*. For Prophecy in its proper notion doth not relate to future events, but to divine Inspiration. So St. Chrysostom saith *περὸντις* is the same with *ἐρμενευτής*, a Prophet, saith he, *is the same with God's Interpreter*: so the word *περὸντις* is used in Greek Authors, as in the Author of the Book *de Mundo*, *περὸντις* is rendred by *Apuleius effari cæteris*; and *Festus* saith, that the *Latines* called those Prophets, which were *oraculorum Interpretes*; and so the Hebrew words are taken in the same sense without any relation to foretelling things to come. So *Moses* is said to be a God to Pharaoh, and *Aaron thy Brother shall be thy Prophet*: i. e. thy interpreter. *Abraham is called a Prophet*, and the *Patriarchs* are all called *Prophets*, in regard that Divine Revelations were more common before the written Law: but the reason why the name of Prophecy came to be restrained to the prediction of things to come, was because future events lying most out of the reach of mens knowledge, the foretelling of these was looked upon as the greatest evidence of divine inspiration. But in the New Testament, prophesying is often taken for the gift of interpreting the hard places of the Old Testament, as *Themistius* calls one that interpreted the hard places in *Aristotle*, *Περὸντις Ἀριστοτέλους*; thence Prophe-  
 1 Cor. 12. 10. *ying* is reckoned among the spiritual gifts; and so these *false Prophets* were not men who pretended to foretell future events, but to the assistance of an infallible Spirit, in giving the sense of Scripture; and by this pretence they transformed themselves into the *Apostles* of Christ, giving out that they enjoyed equal privileges with them: whereby three things may be observed which deserve our consideration.

1. That nothing is more easie, than for false Teachers to pretend to an infallible Spirit; such whom our Saviour and his Apostles did warn men especially against, pretended to be *Prophets* and *Apostles*, and to know the mind of Christ better than they who truly had the assistance of the Holy Ghost. Some think *the bare pretence to Infallibility ought in such a divided state of the Christian world to be entertained as the best expedient to end Controversies, and that Church which doth alone challenge it, ought on that account to be submitted to*; as though the most confident pretenders were to be soonest believed: so they will be, do what we can, by the weakest sort of Mankind, but by none who have and use their judgments. If bare pretences were sufficient, *Simon Magus* did bid the fairest to be *Head of the Church*, for he pretended to be *God's Vicar upon Earth, or the divine Power sent down from Heaven*, which none of the Apostles pretended to. Why then did not the Christian Church submit to *Montanus* his *Paraclete*, when no other Christians pretended to such an immediate inspiration as he did? And certainly *Prisca* and *Maximilla* were better Oracles, than a *Crucifix* was to a late *Pope*. If there be any thing beyond a bare pretence to an infallible Spirit, we desire to see better arguments for it, than the *false Apostles* could produce for theirs;

S. Chryf in  
 1. ad Cor.  
 hom. 36.  
 Auct. de  
 Mundo, c. 1.  
 Plut. de def  
 Orac.

Lucian in  
 Vit. Phil.  
 Exod. 7. 1.

Gen. 20. 7.  
 Pl. 105. 15.

Themist.  
 Or. 1.

1 Cor. 12.  
 10.

Epiph. har.  
 20.

theirs; if there be nothing but a bare pretence, we must leave the *Pope* and *Quakers* to dispute it out.

2. That the pretence to Divine Inspiration is very dangerous to the Christian Church. For we see what mischief it did in the Apostolical times, when there was a true infallible Spirit in the Apostles of Christ to discover and confute it, yet notwithstanding all the care and diligence of the Apostles many were seduced by it. For those who have the least ground, do commonly use the greatest confidence, and denounce *Hell* and *Damnation* the soonest to those who despise and reject them. Which being expressed with a grim countenance and a terrible accent, startles and shakes more persons of weak judgments and timorous dispositions, than all the reasons and arguments they could ever produce. This hath always been the method of deceivers, to pretend to the highest, and then make the sin of those who do not believe them as great, as if the thing were real. Thus the rejecting mens Fanatick Pretences to Revelations and Extasies is cryed out upon, as blaspheming the *Holy Ghost*; and refusing to believe upon the *Roman Churches* pretended Infallibility, is called no less, than denying God's Veracity. We profess to believe the true inspiration of the *Holy Ghost*, and every tittle of what God hath revealed: but we will not swallow Pretences for Evidences, nor Enthusiasms for Revelations. For as the true Religion was at first founded upon Divine Inspiration; so we know that the greatest corruptions of it have sprung from the pretence to it. *Maimonides* saith, that the first beginning of Pagan Idolatry, was owing to the pretence of Inspiration, and immediate Revelations for the Worship of the Stars. However that be, we are certain the Devil made use of Oracles and Enthusiasms, as the most effectual means to bring men to the practice of it; both in *Ægypt*, in *Greece*, and many other places; and they who have taken the pains to collect them, have reckoned one hundred and sixty several Oracles that were in request in the times of Paganism. After Christianity began to be settled in the world, the greatest corrupters of it were the pretenders to divine Inspiration, as the false Apostles, the *Gnosticks*, the *Montanists*, and many others. And the pretence to this, is so much the more dangerous, because it bids high, and is easily taken up, and requires no learning or wit, but only confidence to manage it, and may carry men by impulses and motions to the most unwarrantable actions, and where it meets with an Enthusiastical temper, is very hardly removed.

3. We may observe, that a truly infallible Spirit is not sufficient to put an end to Controversies. For when was that ever more evident, than in the holy Apostles after the miraculous descent of the *Holy Ghost* upon them? Many are apt to say now, *That there will never be an end of these wranglings, and schisms, and disputes in Religion, till there be an infallible Judge to put an issue to them*; But were there not infallible Judges in the Apostles time, that gave infinitely greater evidence of an infallible Spirit, than any ever since have done? But were Controversies put to an end by it? No certainly, when the Apostles complain so much of the Schisms, and Divisions; and Errors, and Heresies, and Disputes, and Quarrellings that were among them. And if so great an evidence of a Divine Spirit manifested by their Miracles, had no greater effect then, what can we imagine the shadow of *St. Peter*, or the dream of infallibility can do in the *Roman Church*? And give me leave to say, it is the Inquisition and not Infallibility, which keep things quiet

quiet among them. But God deliver us from such an end of Controversies.

2. The false Prophets and Apostles pretended to greater mortification and self-denial than the true Apostles did. *St. Hierom* understands their coming in *Sheeps cloathing*, of this pretence to greater severity and rigour of life than others used. Those that go about to deceive, must appear to have something extraordinary this way, to raise an admiration of them among those who judge of Saints more by their looks than by their actions. Whereas the greatest Hypocrites have been always the greatest pretenders this way. Our blessed Saviour was so far from making any shew of this rigour and severity, that he was reproached by the Scribes and Pharisees, those mortified Saints, to be a Wine-bibber, a friend to Publicans and Sinners. Alas! what heavenly looks, and devout gestures, and long prayers, and frequent fastings had they more than Christ or his Disciples? The poor Widows were so ravished with their long prayers, that they thought they could not do better with their houses or estates, than to put them into the hands of such mortified men to the World: till they found, notwithstanding their *Sheeps cloathing*, that by their devouring they were ravening Wolves. Those that seem so much to fly from the world, do but as Soldiers in a battle sometimes do, that seem to fly from their enemies, but only with a design to make them follow, that they may have the more advantage upon them. One would think no men were so afraid of the world, as they that seem to run so fast from it; but they lay their Ambuscado's to entrap it; and if once it gets into their hand, no men know better how to be revenged upon it. What pleasant incongruities are these? to see men grow rich by Vows of Poverty, retired from the world, and yet the most unquiet and busie in it? Mortified to the pleasures of Life, and yet delighting most in following the Courts of Princes? Such kind of Men were the *Pharisees* of old: and who would have thought, that under the Name of that *Jesus*, who so much detested and abhorred their hypocrisie, there should others arise, who have out-done them in their own way? As though Christ had said, *Except your righteousness be like the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* But we need not wonder that in these later ages such pretences should be made use of, since in the very beginning of the Christian Church, these were the common arts of deceivers. They found fault with the Apostles as giving too much liberty to men in the use of Marriage and Meats; but they thought the state of the one was not agreeable to their sanctity, nor the free use of the other consistent with their severe and mortified life. *For they did forbid to marry, and commanded to abstain from meats.* They would not make use of the liberty which God had allowed, but they were ready to take that which he had forbidden: therefore the Apostle gives the true character of them when he saith, *they spake lies in hypocrisie.* There was an outward shew of sanctity and severity in their doctrine; but no men are observed by *Ecclesiastical Historians* to have been more eager of what God had forbidden, than they who were so scrupulous about what God had allowed. We do not say, the case is altogether the same, where men are forbidden absolutely, as though Marriage were unlawfull in it self; which was the case of the ancient Hereticks; and where it is forbidden only to a particular Order of men, as it is in the Church of Rome: but this we say, that where it is forbidden to a particular Order of Men, as though

though it did not become the *sanctity* of that *Order*; this is reviving that hypocrisy which *St. Paul* condemns: especially when it is forbidden on such an account as *Pope Siricus* did it, *because they that are in the flesh cannot please God*; which is in effect sending all married persons to Hell. This was one part of the pretended mortification of false Teachers about Marriage, the other was about Meats. *St. Paul* knew no such holiness in one sort of Meat above another, as though men could fast their bellies full of one, but the least taste of the other destroyed it. What a pleasant thing it is to account that fasting which the unmortified *Epicures* of old accounted their most delicious feasting, *viz. Fish and Wine!* This is not doing so much as the Pharisees did, for they appeared unto men to fast: but in the Church of *Rome* they cannot be said to do that, unless fasting and eating be the same thing. *But may not the Church call not eating prohibited meat fasting?* No doubt it may; as well as call that no bread, which we see, and taste, and handle to be bread. However I cannot understand, but if their Church had so pleased, the eating Flesh and abstaining from Fish might have been called fasting; and so they might have made one entire Fast of a whole years eating; and notwithstanding all the pretence of fasting and mortification in that Church, I cannot see that any man is bound by the Laws of it, to keep one true fast all the days of his life. But if all the mortification required, lies only in a distinction of meats, the false *Apostles* went beyond them in it; for they utterly forbid some sorts, saying, *touch not, tast not, handle not*; and not merely to shew their obedience to the commands of the Church, but that they might not gratifie the desires of the flesh, and therefore the *Apostle* saith, *these things had on that account a shew of wisdom in them*; being in all probability taken from the severe Precepts of the *Pythagorean* Philosophy, which makes him bid them, *Beware lest they were spoiled through Philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, and the principles of the world, and not after Christ.* For if this sort of mortification were a thing so pleasing to God, the *Heathen* principles were more agreeable to his nature, than the doctrine of *Christianity*. This only requires the subduing our inward lusts, and in order to that, to keep the body in subjection; but in the mysteries of the *Heathen* Religion far greater severities were to be undergone, in order to their participation of them. And the hardships were so great in some of their initiations, especially those of *Mithras*, that some died before they could pass through them: and yet for any to be admitted without them, was present death to them. They were to make confession of their sins, shave their heads, change their habits, lie upon the bare ground, fast for several days, and when they eat, it was to be only of some certain meats; these and many other severities they were to go through in order to the purifying their souls, as they thought, and bring them to the state they were in before they came into the body. Some part of these hardships the *Pythagoreans* took into their Philosophy; and from them the *Colossians* began to be infected with them: but *St. Paul* calls them only *vain deceits, the commandments and doctrines of men, things that made a fair shew*, but he looks upon them as corruptions of the doctrine of *Christ*. Yet afterwards the *Montanists* and *Encratites* and others were much stricter and more frequent in these fasts and abstinence, than the *Chatholick* Christians; but the Church thought fit to condemn them, as corruptors of *Christianity*. By all which we see, how apt men are to be deceived by false Teachers, when they pretend to so much *Mortification* above what *Christianity* requires from them.

3. They pretended to know the mind of Christ better than the Apostles did: they pretended, that they had conversed familiarly with Christ upon earth, and understood his meaning better than the Apostles did. And therefore their Disciples in the Church of Corinth, were neither for Paul, nor Apollos, nor Cephas, but they were only for Christ: and gave out that from him they understood, that what he had said concerning the Resurrection, was only to be understood of the state of Regeneration: which Doctrine it seems had gotten great footing in the Church of Corinth by their means. They reported, that the Apostles understood only some common and ordinary things, but the deeper and more hidden mysteries were only made known to them: which makes St. Paul in his Epistles to those Churches which they had corrupted, speak so often of his understanding the mysteries of God: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world to our glory: having made known unto us the mystery of his will: whereby ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ. The true Apostles declared, that they kept back nothing of the counsel of God, but delivered it openly and plainly, to make all men see and understand what that mystery was: the false Apostles pretended, that the Doctrine and Writings of the Apostles did not contain all the great mysteries of the Gospel, but they were received from Christ's own mouth, and conveyed to others by a secret and oral Tradition. The things written by the Evangelists they could not deny to be true; but they were dark and obscure, and could not be understood but by the help of their oral Tradition: and upon this principle, Cerinthus, Basilides, Valentinus, and Marcion went, as appears by Irenæus. For when they saw they could never make good their Doctrines by the Writings of the New Testament, they sought to blast the reputation of these, and set up the Authority of an oral Tradition above them. Men do not use to pick quarrels with their Friends; and therefore when we find any charging the Scripture with obscurity and imperfection, we have reason to believe, they hope for no comfort from it.

4. They made use of the most subtle and crafty methods of deceiving. To this end they were very busie and active, watching every opportunity; therefore St. Paul charges them with sleight and cunning craftiness, lying in wait to deceive: i.e. with using all the arts and tricks of deceivers: as (1.) By deep dissimulation and disguising themselves; not appearing at first to be what they really are; nor letting them understand, what their true doctrine and design is. If any of those they hope to gain, object any thing against them, how do they pity their ignorance, and revile their Teachers, that did so foully misrepresent their Doctrines to them! Alas for them poor men, they neither understand us nor our Religion! "They have taken up things upon trust, and their prejudice will not suffer them to examine things as they are. Have you not been told thus and thus concerning us, and not one word of it is true? Never trust such men more, come, be perswaded by us, and then you shall be truly enlightned. (2.) By raising prejudices against their Teachers; as they did in the Church of Corinth against St. Paul, representing him as a man of a mean and contemptible presence and rude in speech, "Come, say they, and hear our Preachers, with what admirable eloquence and moving expressions they speak, how they dart beams of light into mens minds, and strike through the souls of men! you would never care for this dull and obscure way



“ way of *St. Paul* more. But this is a small thing to disparage only his gifts; “ Observe, say they, his doctrine, and see whither it tends, “ is not he against those that forbid to marry, and abstain from meats? “ Judge now whither these loose doctrines lead men. So *St. Paul* tells us, that they had represented him *as one that walked after the flesh*; and 2 Cor. 10. 2. had prevailed so far upon these people by the sly insinuations, as though all he aimed at, was only for his own advantage, *viz.* that he might be popular, and get himself an interest among that rich people of *Corinth*, so that he tells them, he was fain to live upon other Churches to do them 2 Cor. 11. 8. service: and he tells us afterwards *the false Apostles gave the occasion of* 12. it: and in the Churches of *Galatia* they had turned his greatest friends to be his enemies, and he gives this account of it, *they would exclude us*, Gal. 4. 15, *that you might affect them.* (3.) By sowing Schisms and Divisions among them. This was their master-piece, to beget contentions where they could not prevail themselves. What joy was it to them to see in the Church of *Corinth*, such parties and factions made among them? 1 Cor. 1. 12. some for Paul, some for Apollos, some for Cephas; from hence proceeded 3. 3. envying, and strife, and divisions among them; and this gave them a fair opportunity of breaking them in pieces one against another. And therefore the Apostle saw it necessary to use the utmost means to cure these divisions among them; and elsewhere beseeches the Christians to mark them that cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which Rom. 16. ye have learned, and avoid them; for they that are such, serve not our 17. 18. Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple: *i. e.* they carry on their own designs and interests, by these means; and therefore study all the ways to foment and increase them. “ Why should the disciples of *Peter* yield to those “ of *Paul*, and why should not those of *Apollos* be regarded as much as “ either? And such was the unhappy success of these mens arts in this divided Church of *Corinth*, that notwithstanding all the care of *St. Paul* to put an end to their factions, they brake out with greater fury afterwards, as appears by the Epistle of *Clemens* to them: and he takes notice of those who did cast the arrows of contention among them: and therefore he makes that the chief argument of his Epistle, to defeat the design of the false Teachers, by perswading them to peace and unity among themselves. Clem. Eps. p. 2. 19. (4.) By the most plausible insinuations. By good words and fair speeches, saith *St. Paul*, they deceive the hearts of the simple: they might find by their softness and gentleness that they were in *Sheep's cloathing*. How meek and humble, and insinuating are they where they have any hopes of a prey! how do the bowels of these *ravening Wolves* yearn towards the *filly Sheep*, that look on their outsides! They would not hurt a limb of them for all the world! Nothing but meer zeal for their good, could make them run such hazards, and venture so much as they do! What end could they have in following such stray Sheep, but to reduce them to the true sheepfold? Thus, if the *Wolves* may be believed, there is no danger to the *Sheep*, but from their *Shepherds*: let them but forsake them, and then see what admirable love, and peace, and unity they would live together in: but the *Apostle* well adds to all this, *deceiving the hearts of the simple*, for none else are capable of being thus deceived, by all their fair pretences and plausible insinuations.

5. The false Teachers were for a more pompous and easie way of Religion, than the true Apostles were: These were for the *purity* and *simplicity*

simplicity of the Gospel of Christ, the other were for joyning the Jewish Ceremonies and the Heathen Customs together with it; and by this means they hoped with much more ease to gain Profelytes to them; especially when to this they added a greater liberty in mens lives; so that by these offers, they hoped to gain the vain, the superstitious, and the profaner sort wholly to them. See how St. Paul describes them, *having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it; for of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts.* These were subjects rightly disposed to be deceived by them: their folly made them capable, and their lusts very tractable, to such a formal, pompous, easie Religion: It was by this indulgence of men in their sins, that vile Sect of the Gnosticks gained so much ground in the beginnings of Christianity. St. *Crysostom* thinks these words of our Saviour have a particular respect to the foregoing words, *Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.* Now these words coming immediately after seem to imply, that these false Prophets were for making the gate wider, and the way to Heaven larger than Christ hath done, and such need not fear they shall have many followers, and especially of those who are farthest from the Kingdom of Heaven. All the blessedness our Saviour promises, is to the humble and contrite, to the meek and righteous, to the mercifull, pure and peaceable: but if others make easier conditions of blessedness, no wonder if their doctrine be entertained by those who are willing to be happy, but unwilling to leave their sins. As if false Teachers should turn to our Saviour's Beatitudes into such as these; *Blessed are ye, if ye confess your sins to a Priest, and receive the Sacrament of Penance, for your sins are forgiven. Blessed are ye, if ye vow poverty, and leave the world; for ye shall inherit the earth. Blessed are ye, if ye go in Pilgrimages, and visit the seven Churches (especially in a year of Jubilee, and receive the Pope's benediction) for ye shall be called the Children of God. Blessed are ye, if ye do or suffer evil for the Catholick Churches sake; for great shall be your reward in Heaven. Blessed are they, that howsoever they live, die in St. Francis's habit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* For so *Gregory the Ninth* saith, that *St. Francis obtained this privilege of God, that whosoever had that habit on, could not die ill:* and *St. Francis* adds himself, *That whosoever loved his Order in his heart, how great a sinner soever he was, should obtain mercy of God.* And are not these much easier terms of blessedness, than those our Saviour lays down? Besides, that which makes the way to Heaven more narrow, is, that our Saviour declares, *he came not to destroy the Law but to fulfill it:* and adds precepts of his own to it: But do not they make the way to Heaven much opener, that teach men to dissolve both the Law and the Precepts of Christ? For this is the language of these false Teachers, if we bring their doctrine to the manner of our Saviour's expressions. "Ye have heard, that it hath been said of old, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve;* but we say unto you; that ye are to give worship both to Saints and Angels. Ye have heard, that it hath been said by them of old time; *Thou shalt not make to thy self any graven Image, nor the likeness of anything,* &c. but we say unto you, that this Command may be left out among Christians. You have heard that it hath been said of old, *Thou shalt not kill:* but we say unto you, that to murder Princes, blow up Parliaments, destroy Hereticks is lawfull for the good of the Catholick Church. You have

2 Tim. 3.  
4, 5.

Mat. 7.14.

Sacram.  
Privileg.  
S. Francis.  
p. 6.

“ have heard, that it hath been said of old, *Thou shalt not commit Adultery* : but we say unto you, that marriage in a Priest is worse than  
 “ Fornication. Thus far for the *Law* ; now let us see the liberty they  
 “ take as to the precepts of the *Gospel*. “ Ye have heard that it hath been  
 “ said by Christ, *Drink ye all of this* : but we say unto you that not-  
 “ withstanding this precept of Christ, the Laity must not do it. You  
 “ have heard, that it hath been said by the Apostle, that men ought to  
 “ pray with understanding : but we say unto you, that men need not  
 “ understand what they pray for. Ye have heard that ye have been  
 “ commanded both by Christ and his Apostles, *to read the Scriptures* :  
 “ but we forbid the people to read the Scriptures, and say, that more  
 “ hurt than good comes by it. Judge now, whether the character of  
*false Teachers* do not belong to them, who have found another way, nay,  
 a contrary way to Heaven, to that which our Saviour directed ? And  
 so much for the Caution here given, and the Reason annexed to it ;  
*Beware of all false Prophets, for they come to you in Sheeps cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening Wolves.* I come now,

2. To the Rule laid down by our Saviour for the judging of them ;  
*By their fruits ye shall know them.* He doth not send men to an infallible  
 Judge to know the *true and false Teachers* from each other, but lays down  
 such a *Rule* as he supposed might be sufficient to direct men in their  
 judgment of them. if *Christ* had ever intended to have left such a *Vi-*  
*car upon earth*, whose judgment all Christians are bound to follow, he  
 would never have put them to such a needless tryal of mens Doctrines  
 by their Fruits : the short and plain way had been to have said thus,  
*There will false Teachers arise, but remember that you are to obey and follow*  
*the Bishop of Rome ; and if you will be saved, I command you, to hold in*  
*communion with him.* This had been the fullest and clearest direction  
 in the World ; and no doubt, if our *blessed Saviour* had meant any such  
 thing, such was his care of the souls of Men, this would have been  
 one of the first and plainest precepts of the *Gospel*. But so dark and  
 obscure, so remote and impertinent are the proofs brought from *Scripture*  
 for the *Pope's Supremacy*, that I dare say, that *Aristotle's Politicks*  
 do prove it much better than any Text in the Bible : and those I sup-  
 pose have been of my opinion, who slightly passing over the passages  
 of *Scripture*, have been large in proving, that *Monarchy is the best Go-*  
*vernment*, and therefore ought to be in the Church. Which argument  
 if it have any force for an *Universal Monarchy* in the Church, I should  
 not at all wonder to see the same persons zealous to promote an *Uni-*  
*versal Monarchy* in the World too. For if the argument in the *Canon*  
*Law* be good, That the Pope is above the Emperour, because God crea-  
 ted two great Lights, *the Sun and the Moon* : I hope the same reason,  
 which will prove it necessary for the *Sun to rule the day*, will equally  
 hold, that *the Moon should rule the night*. And I shall easily agree, that  
 when it will be thought reasonable for all the Kings and Princes in the  
 world to submit themselves to one *universal Monarch*, it may be then  
 expedient for all particular Churches, to give up their Rights to the  
 Pope. In the mean time we think it most convenient to follow our Sa-  
 viour's rules, to judge of mens pretences, how great and haughty soe-  
 ver, by the *fruits* they produce. Which *Rule* is not to be understood  
 concerning the *particular actions of men* which have no respect to their  
*doctrines* ; for as *St. Chrysostom* observes, many Hereticks have been men of  
 excellent lives, and so on the contrary ; but we are to understand it of  
 those

Gregor. de  
 Majorit. &  
 Obed.

those *fruits* which their doctrines have a direct influence upon. And therefore this Rule hath a particular respect to two things by which we are to examine the fairest pretences: *viz.* 1. The *design* they tend to. 2. The *means* made use for the accomplishing this design: If therefore the *design* be quite of another nature from that of the *Gospel*; if the *means* be such as are directly contrary to it, we may from thence justly infer, that how plausible soever the pretences are, how fine and soft soever the *Sheeps cloathing* be, yet inwardly they are *ravening Wolves*.

1. I begin therefore, with the *design* of their doctrines. Nothing is more easie, than for men to understand the design of Christianity, *viz.* the exercise of all Christian vertues to fit men for the Kingdom of Heaven: for our Saviour declares, *That his Kingdom is not of this World*; that he came not to meddle with the Rights of Princes, or to dispose of Crowns and Dominions; all that he aimed at, was to possess men with a firm belief of another world, and by the most powerfull motives to perswade men to repentance, and a sober, righteous, and a godly life. And if they did these things, whatever troubles and difficulties they met with in this world, should be abundantly recompensed in that to come. This is the main scope and design of the Christian Religion; and the great art of the *false Prophets* lay in this, that they pretended still to own Christianity, (which was their *Sheeps cloathing*) but withal by secret and pernicious mixtures of their own doctrines to undermine and pervert the whole design of it. So St. Paul saith of them, not that they did oppose, but that they did *pervert the Gospel of Christ*. I marvel, saith he, *that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ to another Gospel: which yet is not another, but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ*. Now I desire, it may be consider'd, whether any thing doth more effectually pervert the design of the Gospel, than the setting up a Kingdom in this world under the pretence of it, that should be paramount to all Princes and Potentates, and to which they owe subjection and obedience? And yet this hath been the open and avowed design of the prevailing Faction in the *Church of Rome* for the last six hundred years. I do not deny but there were some tendencies to it before, and wise men might easily guess what it would come to, if the design came once to be managed by a man of Spirit and Courage, as it was by Gregory the Seventh, who in a Council at Rome published his famous Dictates, *viz. That there is but one Name in the World, viz. that of the Pope: that it was in his power to depose Emperors, and absolve Subjects from obedience to their Princes*. Now the grand design breaking out, all other things were contrived and carried on which were thought necessary to accomplish it: and there being two things needfull for the maintenance of such a pretended Monarchy, *viz. sufficient numbers* of men, whose interest should lie in upholding it; and great revenues to support the dignity of it: These two were taken care of with all the art and industry imaginable. For the first it was necessary to dis-engage them from all civil interests, and yet to preserve their honour and reputation with the people. The former could not be done while the Clergy gave hostages of their fidelity to the Civil Government by the interests of their Families and Children, therefore this Pope did most severely forbid all Clergy-mens marrying; that as the old *Roman Soldiers* were forbidden marriage while they received pay, lest their domestick interests should abate their courage: so the *Celibate* of the Clergy was strictly enjoyned, to make them more usefull and hear-

ty for this design. But lest the number of these should not be thought sufficient, great swarms of *Monks* and *Friars* were encouraged and dispersed in all Countries, and to make them more faithfull to this interest (because Princes might oblige particular Bishops who might curb and restrain these spiritual *Janizaries*) therefore they were exempt from their jurisdiction, and kept in immediate dependence on the Pope. To give yet further encouragement to both Orders, the Doctrine of *Ecclesiastical Liberty* was set on foot; not a liberty from the *Law of Moses*, or the *power of Sin*, or the *dominion of Satan*, which is all the *Liberty* the Gospel speaks of; but an exemption from the power of the Civil Magistrate; insomuch, that the Popish *Casuits* determine, that *Rebellion in a Clergy-man is no Treason, because he is not subject to the civil power.* And this Doctrine of Liberty is no invention of the *Jesuits*; but it is determined by the famous *Councils of Constance, Lateran and Trent, that Lay persons have no Jurisdiction over Ecclesiastical.* But besides this, the Pope hath other ties upon them; every Bishop is at this day sworn to obey the Pope at his Consecration; all the Regular Clergy are under a *Vow of blind obedience* to their *Superiors*, who are more immediately influenced by the *Court of Rome.* Now such an infinite number of persons being made thus sure to the *Papal Interest*, it must be so order'd, that these persons may preserve their reputation among the people; to this end, they are told, that they must depend wholly upon the Priesthood for matters of faith and salvation, and it is of mighty concernment to them to have the good will of the Priests, for that upon their good or bad intention depends the making or marring of their Sacraments. But that no designs might be carried on, which they should not understand, never was there such an invention to that purpose, as *Auricular Confession*: and yet that the people may have greater reverence to their Priests, they are told, that they can make their God at any time by pronouncing the Five Words of Consecration. And what cannot they do, (as one of them bravely said) while they have their God in their hands, and their Prince on his knees? And both these doctrines of *Confession* and *Transubstantiation* were defined by the same Pope *Innocent the Third*, a man of the same spirit and undertakings with *Gregory the Seventh.* And lastly, that no supplies should be wanting to support the Grandeur of the *Papal See*, besides the pretended Donations and Concessions of Princes, all arts imaginable were used to drain money out of all Countries in subjection to the Pope, and to empty it into the Pope's Treasury. This very Kingdom of ours was a remarkable instance of this, during its Vassallage under the Pope's Tyranny. For an account being taken in *Henry the Eighth's* time, it was found, that in the compass of forty years foregoing, no less a sum than 1600000 l. was carry'd to *Rome* upon the sole account of Investiture of Bishops, besides the vast summs that were raised by *Peter-Pence, Dispensations* and *Indulgences*, which were a kind of Contribution upon the sins of the People. Thus we see, how the design was laid and managed for an *Universal Monarchy* in the Church. But some will say, *That the world is grown wiser now.* I heartily wish it were so; for nothing would be more prejudicial to the *Papal Interest*, than its being so. But let us not deceive our selves, the pretensions are as high and as great at *Rome* to this *Monarchy* as ever they were. And whatever some vainly distinguish of the *Court and Church of Rome* in this matter, it is certain those of the *Court of Rome* not only assert, but prove it too, that this doctrine hath been

Sa. Apher.  
P. Clericus  
Ed. Colon.  
Conc. Const.  
Sess. 19.  
Concil. Lat.  
5. Sess. 100.  
Conc. Trid.  
Sess. 25.  
c. 20.  
P. Pontifice.  
Rom. 112.  
Consecr. Ep.

Antiq.  
Brit. A. D.  
1532.

been the doctrine of the *Roman Church* for six hundred years; and they produce for it besides a great number of Authors, no fewer than ten *Councils*, whereof two are allowed by them to be *general*, viz. those of *Lyons* and *Lateran*. But this is not all, but they contend for it not as a probable opinion, but as a thing certain and of faith, and that not barely at *Rome*, but even in *France*. For in the memory of many yet alive, after a hot debate in a general Assembly of the three Estates at *Paris*, the *Pope's Power of deposing Princes* was assented to by all the *Nobility* and *Clergy* of that *Kingdom*. Some particular persons among them, may and do oppose it of late; but they are *excommunicated at Rome* for doing it; and thereby declared as much as they can be, not to be *members of their Church*, for daring to oppose so Orthodox and

*Harangue fait de la part, de la Chambre Ecclesiastique en celle d'utiers Estat. sur l'article du Serment. Par. Monfig. l' Eminentiss. Cardinal du Perron L' An. 1615.*

*K. James's Defence of the Right of Kings, in the Preface.*

Catholick a Doctrine as the *Pope's power of deposing Princes*. Nay, *Cardinal Perron* saith in his eloquent Oration to the third Estate at *Paris*, who opposed this Doctrine, *That unless it were approved, it followed that the Church of Rome for many Ages hath been the Kingdom of Antichrist, and Synagogue of Satan*: and *King James* tells us, *That the Pope in his Letter of thanks to the Nobility, for complying with this blessed Doctrine, called the Commons or Deputies of the third Estate,*

*Nebulones ex fæce plebis, a pack of Knaves of the very dregs of the people.* Very obliging Language from the *Head of the Church*! When all that the *Commons* desired, was only to have this opinion condemned, *That the Pope hath power to depose Princes, and that killing of Kings is an act meritorious to the purchase of the Crown of Martyrdom*: but this by all their instances and arguments, they could never obtain; but the *Nobility* and *Clergy* over-ruled them in it. For the *Clergy*, *King James* saith, *he did not wonder so much, because they look on themselves as properly Subjects to the Pope, and therefore are bound to advance that Monarchy to which they belong.* But for the *Nobility*, saith he, *the King's right arm, to prostitute, and set as it were to sale the Dignity of their King, as if the arm should give a thrust unto the head; I say, for the Nobility to hold and maintain even in Parliament their King is liable to deposition by any foreign Power or Potentate, may it not pass for one of the strangest Miracles, and rarest Wonders of the World? For that once granted, this consequence is good and necessary; That in case the King once lawfully deposed, shall stand upon the defensive, and hold out for his right, he may then be lawfully murdered.* Which consequence is very well understood at *Rome*, and allowed to be good by the *Roman Casuists*; and yet the eloquent *Cardinal* calls that Doctrine which makes Princes indeposable by the *Pope*, *A breeder of Schisms, a gate that makes way for all Heresie to enter; and a Doctrine to be held in such detestation, that rather than he and his fellow Bishops will yield to the signing thereof, they will be contented like Martyrs to burn at a Stake.* Blessed Martyrs the mean while! and fit to be put in the same *Calendar* with the *Gunpowder Traitors*, who suffered, as I shall shew presently, on the same principle; methinks they might have chosen a better cause to have died Martyrs for. But surely it must be an *article of faith*, and a main point of their Religion, which make men *Martyrs* who suffer for it. And such no doubt, it is accounted among them; when the same *Cardinal* saith, *That it leads men not only to unavoidable Schism, but manifest Heresie to deny it; and that it obliges men to confess, that the Catholick Church hath for many ages perished from the earth; for he confidently avows it, that all parties in the Catholick Church have*

*held*

held it, and the whole French Church, till the time of Calvin; that if this Doctrine be not true, the Pope is so far from being Head of the Church and Vicar of Christ, that he is a Heretick and Antichrist, and all the parts of their Church are the Limbs of Antichrist. And if they be so, we cannot help it: but think we have great reason to secure our selves against the infection of such pernicious principles both to Christianity and the Civil Government. And what can be more opposite to the design of Christianity, when that requires men to obey even *Infidel* and *Heathen* Governours for conscience sake, this Doctrine makes it lawfull to depose, destroy, and murder Christian Princes for the Pope and the Churches sake? This is the first thing we are to examine *false Teachers* by; viz. the design of their Doctrines.

Rom. 13. 5.

2. By the means made use of to accomplish this design: If things in themselves evil, repugnant to the principles of humane nature, and those of civil Societies, as well as to the Precepts of Christianity, are made lawfull only for the carrying on their design; we need not go farther to examine them; for *by these fruits we may know them*. There are three things which mainly uphold Civil Societies, *Truth, Obedience, and a care of the good of others*; but if men fall not through any sudden infirmity or surprize, but openly and avowedly justify the lawfulness of *falsehood, treason and cruelty*, when they are intended for the carrying on their design, what could they invent more contrary to the Laws both of God and Man? wherein could they better discover themselves, notwithstanding their *Sheeps cloathing*, to be meer *ravening Wolves*?

1. *Falsehood*, and that both in their words and dealings. 1. In their words, by asserting the lawfulness of *equivocation* and *mental reservation* in their most solemn Answers: as *Father Garnett*, when the Lords asked him, *Whether he had any conference with Hall?* denied it upon his Soul, and reiterated it with such horrible execrations as wounded their hearts that heard him, and immediately upon Hall's confessing it, he excused himself by the benefit of *equivocation*: which being objected against Garnett after his Execution, the Roman Jesuit *Eudemon Johannes* defends him in it, and saith it is lawfull for a man to swear, and take the Sacrament upon it, when he knows in his conscience, what he saith to be absolutely false, if he doth help himself by a mental reservation. And *Tresham* a little before his death in the Tower subscribed it with his own hand, that he had not seen Garnett in sixteen years before, when it was evidently proved, and Garnett confessed they had been together but the Summer before; and all that Garnett had to say for him was, that he supposed he meant to equivocate. Lord! that men going into another world, should think thus grossly to impose upon God and men. What was Speech intended for, if not that others might understand our meaning by it? Did ever any man tell a lye to himself? Truth in words consists in an entire proposition, and not of one half-spoken and half-concealed? and if it be lawfull thus to abuse mankind, it was to no purpose ever to forbid lying; for any but meer fools may help themselves in their most solemn protestations, by some secret reserve in their own minds: and so this principle makes way for all the lyes or perjuries in the world, if a man thinks that he is not bound to betray himself, or if he judges his own damage will be greater by discovering the truth, than others damage will be by concealing it. 2. *Falsehood in dealings*: and that notwithstanding the most solemn Promises, nay, the *safe conduct* of Princes. For notwithstanding all their shifts and evasions in this matter,

Proceed.

against the  
Trait.

Eudem.

Joh. Resp.  
ad Ep. If.Causaub.  
c. 8. p. 171.Proceed. as  
against the  
Trait.

no man that regards his safety, will ever put his life into their hands for the sake of the Council of *Constance*. All that they have to say is, that *the Emperour did as much as lay in him to do; but it belonged to the Council to proceed upon Hereticks, and the Emperour could not hinder that.* And what is this, but plainly to say, that Princes are to keep their words with *Infidels* and *Catholicks*, but they have nothing to do to keep their words with *Hereticks*? And if this be their principle, we must have a care how far we trust them.

2. *Treason*. It is the honour of our *Church of England*, that it asserts the *Rights of Princes* so clearly and fully, without tricks and reservations; and all that mean honestly, love to speak plainly. But how many cases have they in the *Church of Rome*, wherein men are acquitted from their duty from their Princes? If a *Toy* comes into the *Pope's* head, or upon some *Pique* or *Jealousie*, he falls to the censures of the *Church*, and *Excommunicates* a *Prince*: what a case is this poor *Prince* in, as to all those *Subjects* that think themselves bound to obey the *Pope*? They may lawfully in their own opinion rise against him, fight with him, assassinate and murder him. And which is very observable, all this while they are not bound to believe the *Pope* infallible in these censures; so that right or wrong if a *Prince* chance to fall under the *Pope's* censures, we see what a liberty is left to all his creatures to ruin and destroy their *Sovereign*? The frequent attempts upon *Queen Elizabeth*, the murder of *Henry* the Third of *France*, after their *Excommunications* by *Pius* the Fifth, and *Sixtus* the Fifth, are sufficient evidences of the danger of *Princes* in these cases. By which last instance, we see it is not only the case of *Herefie*, which renders them obnoxious to the *Popes* censures; but particular piques and quarrels; or if the *Pope* chance to think a man unfit to govern, as in the case of *Chilperic* of *France*; or if they detain *Church-Lands* belonging to *Monasteries*, in which case *Becanus* saith expressly, *Kings and Princes* are to be *excommunicated* and *deprived*: and *Pope Paul* the Fourth was perfectly of his opinion; and declared, *They were in a state of Damnation that held them*. But so far some of them, are kind to *Princes* to say, *That they ought not to be deposed, till they are excommunicated*; and yet *Gregory* the Seventh before *excommunication* deprived the *Emperour Henry* the Fourth for the damnable *Herefie*, of defending his own *Rights*. But since they are liable to these horrible censures upon so many causes, we may see how very ticklish and uncertain the doctrine of *obedience* must be among them, and that mens being guilty of *Treason* depends upon the *Popes* pleasure. And methinks herein the case of *Princes* deserves hugely to be pitied, that when no man thinks it lawfull to cut another man's throat, or put him out of his house and estate, because he is *excommunicated*; yet if a *Prince* falls under *excommunication*, he loses presently his *Right* to the *Crown*, and his *Subjects* may take away *Crown*, *Liberty*, and *Life* from him.

3. *Cruelty*. And by this they fully discover themselves to be *raving Wolves*: when they have lost all the tenderness, and love, and good nature of *Men* or *Christians*: when no design can be so horrible or bloody, so mischievous and treacherous, so base and cruel, but persons will be found to undertake it, and that under a pretence of *Conscience* and *Religion*. I need not here tell the long and dreadful stories of the *Roman Inquisition*, the numbers of those other *Countries* who have been *butchered* on the account of *Religion*, but the *Fact*, I mean

the

*Becan. cont.*  
*Angl. p.*  
127.

*History of*  
*the Coun-*  
*cil of Trent*  
l. 5. n. 392.



the Conspiracy, (for God be thanked it went not farther) which we bless God for the discovery and defeating of this day, doth abundantly manifest the *fruits* of those doctrines, which they had sucked in from the *Roman Church*. If only a few desperate persons upon personal provocations had been engaged in so villainous a design, we should have had never the less reason to thank God for our deliverance; but since it doth appear, that those persons who undertook it, pretended nothing in it but *Conscience and Religion*, we have not only reason to abhor the undertaking, but the principles which animated them to it.

I know very well what *Sheeps cloathing* hath been of late cast over the most barbarous cruelty of these *ravening Wolves*; and men by their impudence would endeavour to bear us down, *that it was only a project of some few malecontents, drawn in by the subtilty of a crafty Statesman in those days; and that it ought not in justice or honour to be imputed to the principles of their Religion*. Therefore to lay open before you the just and true circumstances of this horrible Conspiracy, I shall proceed upon these three particulars.

Apology for  
Papists.  
Reply to  
the Answer,  
p. 203.  
Advocate  
for Liberty  
of Consci-  
ence, p. 218.

1. That the persons engaged in it had no personal provocations to move them to it.

2. That all the motives they had to it were from the principles of their Religion.

3. That the Church of *Rome* hath never since detested the principles upon which they acted; or set any mark of infamy on the Actors in it.

1. That the persons engaged in it had no personal provocations. What injury had *Catesby*, or *Piercy*, or *Tresham*, or *Digby* received from the *King* or *Parliament*, to stir them up above thousands of others to be the great managers of so hellish a plot? Did not they enjoy their estates and places, and one of them at *Court* too? Why should these men venture lives, estates, honours, families, and all that was dear to them? Were their estates confiscated before; and themselves every hour in danger of having their throats cut; This might make men of high spirits grow desperate. But not the least tittle of all this was pretended, by the most enraged of them: nothing but *Zeal for Religion and the Catholick Cause*, was ever pleaded by them. To which purpose these are remarkable words of *King James* in his *Speech in Parliament* upon the discovery. *For if these Conspirators, saith he, had only been bankrupt persons, or discontented upon occasion of any disgraces done them, this might have seemed to have been but a work of revenge. But for my own part, as I scarcely ever knew any of them, so cannot they alledge so much as a pretended cause of grief, and the wretch himself in hands doth confess, that there was no cause moving him or them, but Meerly and Only Religion.* And the *King* himself again avowed it to the whole Christian world, *That the Papists had not before this horrible design, the least colour of any discontent from him, that he had so far suspended penalties, and abated the rigorous execution of Laws against them, to such a degree, as gave great suspicion to his best Subjects, who told him what would be the fruit of all his kindness to them. Nay, he saith, they grew to that height of pride in confidence of his mildness, as they did directly expect, and assuredly promise to themselves Liberty of Conscience, and equality with his other Subjects in all things: that he had shewn particular Favours to many of them, gave them free access to him, eased them of their payments, set their Priests at liberty, granted a general Pardon to them after conviction.* Now after all this, what colour or pretence in the world can there be to say,

K. James's  
Works,  
p. 501.

K. James's  
Works,  
p. 253.

that only discontent and despair brought these men to it? O, but it might however be the cunning of a great Minister of State, to draw a few Gentlemen and others into such a Plot. This I know is suggested and believed by some, who think it a fine thing to talk out of the common road, and to be thought more skilfull in Mysteries of State than other men. But I would fain understand from whence they derive this profound intelligence at such a distance of years. If King James may be believed, if the Popish Historians and Apologists at that time may be credited, there was not the least intimation given, either by the *Actors* or *Sufferers*, from abroad or at home of any such thing. Was not the World sufficiently alarm'd at the news of this dangerous and unparallell'd Conspiracy? were not men very inquisitive into all the particulars? and those of the *Church of Rome*, especially the *Jesuits*, concerned in point of honour to wipe off the stain from themselves, and to cast the *odium* of it on a great *Minister of State*? Were not two of the *Jesuits* who were conscious of the Plot, preferred afterwards at *Rome*? and how many Writings came from thence about it; and yet not one man discovered the least suspicion of any such thing? If they go on in this way without the least shadow of proof to lay the contrivance of this Plot on a *professed Protestant*; for all that I know, by the next age, they may hope to persuade men, that it was a Plot of *Protestants* to blow up a *Popish King* and *Parliament*.

2. That they had all their Motives and Encouragements from the principles of their Religion to undertake such a design. (And *Philostatus* contends, that the murder of *Domitian* ought rather to be attributed to the doctrines of *Apollonius*, than to the hands of *Stephanus* and *Parthenius*.) For which we are to consider, that they were fully possessed with this as a principle of their Religion, *That it was absolutely in the Pope's power to deprive heretical Princes of their dominions*: which had been rooted in them, especially after that *Pius* the Fifth had fully declared it in his *Bull* against *Queen Elizabeth*. In her case they made no scruple to destroy her if they could, and thought they should do it with a good conscience. And there are no Villains in the World like those who are Villains out of conscience. But as to the *Queen's* Successor, the Pope had declared nothing; till such time as *Garnett* being *Provincial* of the *Jesuits*, had received two *Breves* from *Rome*, where in he declared, *That in case they should suspect the Queen's Successor would not be true to their Religion, it was lawfull for them to use their endeavours to keep him from the Crown*. These *Breves* *Garnett* shews to *Catesby*, who took the rise of his design from hence. And when afterwards in conference *Garnett* desired him to know the *Popes* opinion in it, he replied, *That he needed not ask that, for if it were lawfull to exclude him before he came to the Crown, it was lawfull to take him away when he was in possession of it*. Which argument was so strong, that *Garnett* either had no mind, or was not able to answer it. All the scruple *Catesby* had after this was, *whether it were lawfull to destroy the innocent and guilty together?* which *Garnett* fully resolved him in, so it were for the greater good of the *Church*. Upon these two grounds as *Widdrington*, a *Roman Catholick* well observes, *Catesby* laid the foundation of his whole Conspiracy. After this, it's evident by manifest proofs, and *Garnett's* own confession under his hand, that he and other *Jesuits* did understand the particulars of the Plot; and *Tesmond* another *Jesuit* and he discoursed the circumstances walking together in *Moor-fields*; and that *not in confession*, as is pretended, for the *Jesuit* did not confess it as a fault, but advised

l. 7. Vit.  
Apol.

Widdringt.  
Append ad  
Supplicar.  
P. 133.  
Proceed.  
against the  
Traitors.  
Garnett's  
Tryal.

advised with him about particulars, and asked him, *who should be Protector of the Kingdom after the Plot took effect?* as Garnett himself confessed. But suppose it had been *in confession*; why might not *Treason* be discovered as well as *Herese*? and their *Casuits* acknowledge, that *Herese* may be revealed? There is only this difference, that *Treason* is only against *Secular Princes*, but *Herese* against the interest of *their Church*; which is dearer to them than all the *Princes Lives* in the world. Yea, so busie were the *Jesuits* in encouraging this Plot, that they not only debated it among themselves; but one of them gave them the Sacrament upon the *Oath of Secrecy*, and then absolved them after the discovery; another prayed for good success, another comforted them after it was discovered by the examples of good designs that had wanted success. And must we after all this believe, that only a few discontented *Laicks* were engaged in it, and that it was nothing at all to their Church? when the *Jesuits* gave all the encouragement to them in it, in point of conscience: so that it was truly, as well as wittily said of one, That the *Jesuits double garment* might well be called *Charity*, because it covered a multitude of sins.

3. But if the *Church of Rome* give no encouragement to such actions; why hath it not detested the principles upon which it was grounded? Why hath it not removed all suspicion in the minds of *Princes* and *People* of giving any countenance to such treasonable designs? But on the contrary, the same doctrines are still avowed, and the persons of the *Conspirators* honoured. *Widdrington* saith, That *Garnett's name* was inserted into the *English Martyrology*, though he gave it under his hand, that he died for *Treason*, That *his Bones were kept for Reliques*; and *his Image set over Altars*, as of a holy *Martyr*? Is this the honour of *Regicides* and *Traitors* in the *Roman Church*? When in the late prosperous Rebellion, the prevailing Faction had proceeded to such a height of Wickedness, as to take away the life of our Gracious Sovereign, how did the *Church* and *Nation* groan and grow impatient till they could vindicate the honour of our Religion and Country! not only by an execution of Justice on the persons of the *Regicides*, but by declaring in *Parliament* against the principles that led to it. What hath there been done like this in the *Court* or *Church* of *Rome*, against the principles or actors of this *Gunpowder Treason*? If it had succeeded, by all that we can see, *Paul* the Fifth might have admired the providence of God in it, as much as *Sixtus* the Fifth did in the murder of *Henry* the Third of *France*: and we may guess his mind shrewdly by the *Bulls* he published against the *Oath of Allegiance*, which the *King* was forced for his own security to impose on the *Papists* after this Conspiracy. With what scorn and contempt doth *Bellarmino* treat the *King* in his Writings against him, and tells him in plain terms, *if he would be secure, he must give liberty to their Religion*? It seems then, their principles are dangerous to *Princes* where they have it not. What mark of dishonour was there set by their own party on any one of the *Conspirators*? Two of the *Jesuits* upon their arrival at *Rome*, met with such hard usage, that one was made the *Pope's Penitentiary*, the other a *Confessor* in *St. Peter's* at *Rome*. And is not this the way to let the world see, how detestable such persons and practices are to their Church? To conclude all, I challenge those of the *Roman Church* to produce any one solemn Declaration of that Church, (I do not say of *Secular Powers* or some particular persons, or Councils rejected at *Rome*) whereby they make it unlawfull for the *Pope* to de-

*Widdring-  
ton. Appen-  
p. 150.*

pose Princes, or to absolve Subjects from their Oaths of Allegiance to them. But instead of that, even in this present age of ours, that opinion which makes it unlawfull, hath been condemned at *Rome* by three severall Popes, *Paul* the Fifth, *Innocent* the Tenth, and *Alexander* the Seventh : and which is more considerable, all three have condemned it with a particular respect to the case of his Majesty's Subjects ; and not merely condemned it as a false opinion, but *as wicked and contrary to faith*. And *is not the world grown wiser now* as to these matters ? But if they be not, I hope we may be. And after their frequent Treasons and horrible Conspiracies, and principles never disowned by their Church, have we not reason to entertain suspicion of them, as to their principles of Civil Government, till they give sufficient security, that these pernicious principles have no influence upon them ?

But blessed be that God, that hath hitherto defeated the malicious purposes of the inveterate enemies of our Church and Religion : that hath brought to light these works of darkness ; and yet continued us in the enjoyment of the benefits of this mighty deliverance to this day. May the same Gracious God go on still to protect our established Religion, against all Foreign Usurpations and Domestick Factions. May our love to it still encrease, and our zeal for its Preservation make us study the best means to preserve it ; that neither Divisions among our selves, nor Assaults of our common enemies may be ever able to ruin and destroy it ; that we may still say with the Psalmist, *Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us over as a prey unto their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the Fowlers ; the snare is broken and we are escaped. Our help is in the Name of the Lord who made Heaven and Earth.*

Psal. 124.  
6, 7, 8.

S E R-

# SERMON XV.

Preached before the

# K I N G,

February 24. 167<sup>4</sup><sub>5</sub>.

HEBREWS III. 13.

---Lest any of you be hardned through the deceitfulness of sin.

**W**hen the *Jewish Christians* had formed themselves into an established *Church*, and were become considerable for their number, as well as for their zeal and devotion, their obstinate Brethren thought it high time for their own security, at least to weaken and divide them, if they could not wholly suppress and destroy them. For this end, they made use of different instruments and means, according to the different seasons, and dispositions of men. Sometimes when they had any encouragement, or connivence from the *Roman Power*, they set upon them with rage and fury, *spoiling their goods*, and threatening their lives: But this hard usage did only heighten the courage, and unite the affections of the more zealous Christians. Sometimes they suggested to them the mighty veneration, which their whole Nation always had for *Moses* and the *Law*, and what an infinite scandal and dishonour it would be to them all, to have that *Law*, which was delivered by Angels, confirmed by Miracles, established by Prophets, admired by the Gentiles, and had continued among them for so many Ages, now of a sudden to be laid aside for the sake of a new institution, that expressed no more regard to them than to any other Nation in the World. And so great was the love which the *Jews* had to their own Country and Religion, such an opinion was generally received among them of the peculiar favour of God towards them, that they who could not be shocked by persecution, were in danger of being overcome by flattery. From hence the *Author* of this *Epistle* makes it his business to shew the excellency of *Christ* above *Moses*, and of his *institution* above that of the *Law*, in respect of the *Priesthood* and *Sacrifices*, and the *benefits* which come by them; and that although this *new and living way* were but lately discovered, yet it was that which was always designed by God, foreseen by the *Patriarchs*, foretold by the *Prophets*, and longed for by good men as the *Consolation of Israel*: and it could be no more disparagement

paragement to *Moses* and the *Prophets* to yield to the *Glories* of the Kingdom of the *Messias*, than it is to the Stars not to be seen when the light of the Sun appears. But besides these, there were some among them capable of being wrought upon by other kind of arguments, such I mean, who out of a sudden transport of zeal, and being convinced by the miraculous operations of the *Holy Ghost*, had declared themselves *Christians*, but yet retained a secret love to their sins, and the pleasures of this World: these were the Persons whom the *Apostle*, not without reason, expresses the greatest jealousy of, as in danger of Apostasie: and therefore in many places of this Epistle, he represents to them the dreadfull consequences of such an Apostasie, for it was no leſsthan

Heb. 6. 6. crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open ſhame; it was counting the blood of the Covenant wherewith they were ſanctified an unholy thing, and doing deſpight unto the ſpirit of Grace; nay it was not only crucifying, but treading under foot the Son of God; and therefore he bids them conſider, what puniſhment ſuch perſons would deſerve at the hands of God into which they muſt fall, and what hopes there could be of pardon for thoſe who ſo openly rejected the only means of obtaining it; For if they did herein ſin wilfully after they had received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which ſhall devour the Adverſaries. But he not only ſets before them the ſad effects of Apostasie, but as one that loved their ſouls, and deſigned to prevent their ruin, he gives them the beſt advice and counſel againſt it: He knew well enough it was not the diſſatisfaction of mens reaſon, which was the ground of their infidelity: but, as mens more open deſigns are governed by ſuch ſprings which are leaſt diſcovered; ſo, whatever theſe warping Chriſtians might pretend, as to zeal for the Law, and their ancient Religion, the bottom of all was a principle of infidelity, not ariſing from want of ſufficient reaſon to convince them, but from a cloſe and ſecret love of ſin which made them willing to quarrel with whatever was ſo repugnant to it, as the doctrine of Chriſt. To this end, he puts them in mind of the caſe of their *Fore-fathers* in the *Wilderneſs*, who wanted no arguments to convince them of God's Goodneſs and Providence; yet nothing would ſatiſfie them, but they were

Heb. 3. 11, 12. ſtill murmuring and complaining, till at laſt God ſware in his wrath that they ſhould not enter into his reſt. " And ſince you all acknowledge, they " had reaſon enough to be ſatiſfied, but out of an obſtinate and ſtubborn " humour hardned their hearts in the day of temptation in the *Wilderneſs*; " take heed Brethren, ſaith the *Apoſtle*, leſt there be in any of you ſuch an evil " heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; and do not look upon " this advice as vain and needleſs to you that are called the *believing Jews*, " but you have cauſe to be very watchfull over one another, eſpecially " in this tempting Age, exhorting one another daily while it is called to " day, leſt any of you be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of ſin. As though he had ſaid to them, " You who now glory in the name of *Believers*, and are hitherto as forward as any in the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, do not think your ſelves to be above the need of any helps " to confirm your faith, and to arm you againſt the aſſaults of temptations, for your very ſecurity may betray you; but conſider the ſin that " doth ſo eaſily beſet you on every ſide, the various artifices it makes uſe " of to deceive men, and when it hath once gotten admillion, how " ſtrangely it bewitches and infatuates the minds of men, how unwilling they

“ they are to be convinced of their sins, how much more unwilling  
 “ to part with them; and how naturally the love of sin brings men to  
 “ infidelity, and then you will see how great reason there is, why you  
 “ should be *exhorting one another daily while it is called to day, lest any*  
 “ *of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

In which words, are these three things considerable.

1. The *danger* they are in of *being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*, who have the most powerful *motives* and *engagements* against it.

2. The *manner* whereby *sin* doth prevail upon men to harden them, *through the deceitfulness of sin.*

3. The *care* that all Christians ought to have to prevent *being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin* : *Lest any of you, &c.*

1. The *danger* men are in of *being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*, though they have the most powerfull *motives* and *engagements* against it. For never any Persons had greater arguments against returning to the practice of sin, than these to whom this *Epistle* was written. They had embraced among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, *the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards* Heb 6.1, 2. *God, of the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands* (for the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost) *and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.* And what can we suppose to have greater force and efficacy to restrain men from sin, than what is contained in these fundamentals of Christianity? But we shall find that no *Motives* have ever been great enough to restrain those from sin, who have secretly loved it, and only sought pretences for the practice of it.

Such is the frame and condition of humane nature considered in it self, so great are the advantages of reason and consideration for the government of our actions, so much stronger are the natural motives to vertue than to vice, that they who look no farther, would expect to find the world much better than it is. For why should we suppose the generality of mankind to betray so much folly, as to act unreasonably and against the common interest of their own kind? as all those do, that yield to the temptations of sin: For if we set aside the consideration of a Divine Law, *to sin* is nothing else but to act foolishly and inconsiderately. But on the other side, if men first look into the practice of the world, and there observe the strange prevalency of Vice, and how willing men are to defend as well as to commit it; they would be apt to imagine that either there is no such thing as Reason among men, or that it hath very little influence upon their actions; and that the talk of Vertue was first found out by some great enemy to the Felicity of Mankind. Such different apprehensions would men have from the different ways of beholding the Picture of Humane Nature; either as it is in its own frame, or as it is to be seen in the World. They who have with the greatest judgment and care searched into the nature and first principles of humane Societies, have all agreed that the chief end and design of men in joyning together was, for the mutual benefit and advantage of each other; and that in order to this, certain Laws of *Justice, Equity, Mercy, Truth, Gratitude, Temperance*, as well as of *Subjection to Government*, ought to be inviolably observed by men. And since these things have the universal consent of mankind to be for their general good, how comes it to pass, that men being joyned in these Societies for such ends, make so little Conscience of the practice of them? How come so many to live as it were in open defiance to these Fundamental Laws of

Nature? How come others, only to make use of the pretence of vertue to deceive, and of honesty and integrity to cover the deepest dissimulation? If they be not good, why are they pretended? If they are good, why are they not practised? So that whether we consider mankind in it self, or in Society, we find the *Motives* to vertue to be much more weighty and considerable than those to sin; and yet that the practice of men is directly contrary.

But it may be said, *that all this might happen in the world for want of wit and education to polish and improve the natural Faculties of mens minds, and to direct and encourage the practice of vertue.* I wish the world had not so many instances, that men of the greatest wit have not been men of the best Morals; but if wit, and education, and Philosophy had been the most effectual means to reclaim men from sin, where should we have looked more for the flourishing of vertue, than in *Greece and Rome*? And yet in those times, when all the accomplishments of *wit* were at the highest in those places, the manners of men were sunk into the greatest filth of debauchery. It would make one astonished to read the admirable discourses of their *Philosophers*, and to consider the strange height that *eloquence* and *wit* were arrived to among their *Orators* and *Poets*; and then to compare the account given of the manners of the *Gentile* World, not only by their own *Satyrist*s but by the *Apostles* in their several *Epistles*: what a monstrous *Catalogue* of sins do we meet with in the *first Chapter to the Romans*? of sins of so deep a dye, and of so horrid a nature, and such an Inventory of all sorts of Wickedness, that one might imagine the Apostle had been rather describing some vision of Hell, than the seat of the Roman Empire. To the same purpose he speaks of the *Corinthians* and *Ephesians*, who thought themselves behind none of the *Greeks* of that Age in the breeding then most in Vogue; but we need not instance in particulars, when *St. Peter* calls it in general *the will of the Gentiles, to live in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings and banquetings*, as well as *abominable Idolatries*; and *St. John* in short saith, *the whole world lyeth in wickedness.*

Rom. 1. 26,  
27, 28; 29,  
30, 31, 32.  
1 Cor. 6. 10.  
Ephes. 4.  
17, 18.

1 Pet. 4. 3.

1 Joh. 5. 19.

It might be worth our while to consider how so universal a degeneracy of manners should happen in those ages, when men pretended more to Wit and Learning, than they had done in any time before. And for this, it were very unreasonable to assign any Cause that were equally common to all other Ages, such as the corruption of humane nature; which, how great soever it be, is the same all times; neither do I think it reasonable to lay it wholly on the bad examples of the teachers of vertue, knowing how malicious the worst of men are in endeavouring to make those who seem to be better, to be as bad as themselves: but there are some peculiar reasons for it, and I wish they had been only proper to those times: as,

I. Separating *Religion* and *Morality* from each other. When their *Religion* was placed in some solemn Rites, and pompous Ceremonies, and costly Sacrifices; but all the matters of *Morality* were confined to their *Schools*, there to be enquired after by those that had leisure and curiosity for them. As though God were more concerned for the colour, and age, and pomp of their Sacrifices, for the gestures and shews of their devotion; than for the purity of their hearts, the sincerity of their minds, or the holiness of their lives. When once the people had swallowed that pernicious principle, that *Morality* was no part of their *Religion*, they had no great regard to the good or evil of their actions, as long as a little charge,

and



and four looks, and going to their Temples at certain times were thought sufficient to expiate their sins. And they were much more encouraged in Wickedness, when the Gods they worshipped were represented on the stage as acting all manner of villainies: and no doubt they thought it a great comfort to them in their debaucheries, that their Gods were as *good fellows* as themselves. And what could all the precepts of *Philosophers*, or sayings of *wise men* signifie to those who were so far from looking on vertue as any necessary part of their Religion, that they thought those fit to be worshipped for Gods, whom they never believed to have been good men?

2. When they had thus rendered vertue unnecessary, by making it no part of their Religion, the next thing was to make it appear *ridiculous*; which was a certain way to make *Fools* out of love with it; who do not consider, what is fit to be laughed at, but what is so. When *Socrates* at *Athens* undertook with many sharp and cutting *Ironies* to reprove the vices of his Age; and with a great deal of Wit and Reason to perswade men to the sober practice of Vertue, the licentious people knew not what to do with him, for they were not able to withstand the force of his arguments; at last *Aristophanes* (having a *Comical Wit*, whereby he was able to make any thing seem ridiculous although he knew very well the *Wisdom* and *Learning* of *Socrates*; yet) to please and humour the people, he brings him upon the Stage, and represents his grave instructions after such a manner, as turn'd all into a matter of laughter to the people of *Athens*: which did more mischief to the reputation of *Vertue* among them, than the taking away his life did. For, his dying convinced the people he was in good earnest, and brought a great veneration to his memory; whereas the other expos'd him only to scorn and contempt; and the people were made judges whether it were with cause or no: who besides their ignorance and want of judgment, were too much Parties to be Judges. This is the method which men take, when they set their *Wits* against *Vertue* and *Goodness*; they know it is impossible to argue men out of it; but it is very easie by ridiculous postures, and mimical gestures, and profane similitudes, to put so grave and modest a thing as *vertue* is out of Countenance, among those who are sure to laugh on the other side. I do not think such things can signifie any thing to wise men; but when was the world made up of such? and therefore it signifies very much to the mischief of those who have not the *courage* to love *despised vertue*; nor to defend a Cause that is *laughed down*. And to these I may now add,

3. The *bad examples* of others, especially of those to whom it belonged to *teach and encourage Vertue* above others. No man will pretend, that it is ground enough for him to do a thing meerly because he sees another do it; yet in all Ages men have seen and complained that the power of Examples hath outdone that of Laws. Some that think themselves more subtle than others, question whether those mean what they say, who speak one thing and do another; and therefore they will do what they think the others mean; which were a good plea, if their actions were better than their words. Others think, that all discourses of vertue, and honesty, and true honour, are meer matter of talk for men to entertain some idle hours with, and that men are universally agreed in nothing but in speaking well and doing ill. These look on vertue as a kind of *Phoenix*, a thing often talked of, and believed by some, but never seen by any: but such find all things so very bad at

home, that out of charity to themselves, they believe the whole World to be like them. Others have so much natural modesty and sense of shame, that they have not the courage to commit a great wickedness, unless they were hardened to it by the example of greater sinners before them. But the most common reason of the prevalence of example is, that men find in themselves a strong propensity and inclination to do evil, and are willing to meet with such a pretence for committing it, that they do but as others do; and therefore I cannot think that bare example were enough to corrupt the World if there were not some antecedent inclination in humane nature to the practice of evil. For since there is less reason to follow bad examples than good, why should one prevail more than the other in the world, if there were nothing but the bare example to move? But that inclination being considered, we may easily give an account of the ill consequence which the bad examples of those who are to direct and encourage others in virtue, must needs be of to the rest of mankind. *Xenophon* was not without reason so much displeas'd, when he saw some of the best of *Socrates's* Disciples, make their Court to *Dionysius* in *Sicily*; knowing how inconsistent the reputation of virtue is, with the very suspicion of Flattery: and that nothing makes great men more suspicious of virtue, than when they see *Philosophers* become *Flatterers*, and carrying on the restless designs of ambition under the pretence of teaching the art of contentment to others. It was this which made the very name of them become so odious at *Rome*, that even virtue it self was hated for their sakes: so that the very teachers of virtue contributed to the increase of vice. Especially, when by their endless disputes and wranglings about words and terms of art, they made the people suspect they did but play prizes before them; and only pretended to quarrel, but were well enough agreed to cheat and deceive them. Upon such grounds as these, all the *Motives* to *Virtue* contained in the *Writings* and *Instructions* of *Philosophers* lost their due force and efficacy on the minds of the people, who were rather more hardened in their sins by these disadvantages which attended the means that were used to reclaim them from the practice of them.

But when all other motives proved ineffectual by these disadvantages, what could be more reasonably expected, than that the motives of the *Gospel* should prevail with men, being of so great weight in themselves, and recommended with so much advantage to the World, by the examples of those who delivered them? The great arguments of Christianity against the practice of sin are not drawn from any uncertain *Topics*, or nice and curious speculations; but from the influence mens good or evil actions in this World will have upon their happiness or misery in another. And what concerns another state is revealed with much more clearness, and confirmed by stronger evidence, and enforced by more moving considerations, than ever it was before among the best and wisest of the then Gentiles. The Doctrine of Christianity is plain and peremptory in this matter, *that God will render to every man according to his Works: and that the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.* And however prone men are to be deceived with *vain words*, yet let them look to themselves, *God will not be mocked,* (however men may be) *for because of these things the wrath of God will come upon the Children of disobedience.* No Sacrifices, no prayers, no penances, no vows and promises will keep off this wrath of God without a hearty repentance and timely reformation. Never any Religion or Institution

*Xen. ep. ad  
Æsch.*

Rom. 2. 6.  
1. 18.

Gal. 6. 7.  
Eph. 5. 6.

Institution in the World made it so much its business to keep men from doing evil, and to persuade them to do good, as the Christian doth. The Apostles thought it the greatest contradiction to their profession, for any men to be called Christians, and to live in the practice of their former sins, *Let the time past of your life suffice you*, saith St. Peter, *to have wrought the will of the Gentiles*, i. e. that time past when you were no Christians. To be a Christian then was all one as of a loose, profane, dissolute person to become sober, religious, exact in his conversation. *To put on Christ*, was but another phrase, *for making no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof*; *To learn Christ*, was all one as to put off *as concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitfull lusts*; and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Those were the blessed days of Christianity, when it was no hard matter to understand what it was to be a Christian; when the niceties of disputes, and the subtle artifices of men of corrupt minds had not yet debauched the notion of Christianity, to reconcile it with the lusts of men. To be a Christian then, was not to be versed in the subtilties of the Schools; or to be able to swallow contradictions without chewing them; or to be as fierce and earnest for every doubtfull opinion and uncertain custom, as if the substance of Christianity were like *Epicurus* his World made up of a great number of very small and restless Atoms. To be a Christian, was not to fight for the Faith, but to live by it; not to quarrel for good Works, but to practise them; in short, to be a Christian was to depart from iniquity and to do good; to be meek and humble, and patient, and peaceable towards all men; to be charitable and kind; to be sober and temperate in all things, to be holy, sincere, and innocent in his actions towards God and men. This is the true *Idea* of a Christian, and not a meer *Idea*; but such as every one that owns himself to be a Christian is bound by the most sacred vow of *Christianity* in *Baptism* to be like; so that, if either the consideration of their own eternal welfare, or the nature, design, or honour of Christianity, or their own most solemn engagements can restrain men from the practice of sin, we see that those who are Christians, are under the most powerfull motives and engagements against it.

But yet such there have been (I wish I could not say such there are) who have broken through all these things, and have been hardened thro' the deceitfulness of sin. One might have thought if any persons had been out of this danger, they had been such as the Apostle makes this exhortation to; who had seen the miraculous operations of the holy Ghost for confirming the Doctrine and Motives of Christianity; nay, who had themselves been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and had tasted of this Heavenly gift, and of the good word of God, and of the powers of the World to come: Who had testified their repentance for their former sins in the most publick and solemn manner, and had entered into the most Sacred Vow of Baptism, never to return more to the practice of it: who had done this in the heat of persecution, which they endured with courage and rejoicing; yet after all these things, the Apostle expresses a more than ordinary jealousy lest any of them should fall away, and their hearts be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. When *Critias* and *Alcibiades* had forsaken the paths of vertue, which they seemed very forward in, while they continued under the instructions of *Socrates*, *Xenophon* saith *There were some that contended that they never had any vertue at all because* those

<sup>1</sup> Pet. 4 3.

Rom. 13.

<sup>14</sup> Eph. 4 20,

<sup>21, 24</sup>

Heb. 6. 4, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Απομωνι.

βιβλ. α. β.

those 4. 16.

those who once had it could never lose it: but for his part, he saith, he was by no means satisfied with their opinion: for as men by discontinuing bodily exercises make themselves incapable of doing those things which they were most expert in before; so men by neglect the of improving their minds in vertue, and giving way to the temptations of honour and pleasure (which was the case of Critias and Alcibiades) may by degrees lose the force of all the motives to vertue, and consequently the vertue it self. It is agreed by all men who understand any thing in these matters, that even Grace, although it be the effect of a divine power on the minds of men, is of it self capable of being lost; the great dispute is, whether it may be lost past recovery? But as we have no more reason to set any bounds to the Grace of God in mens Recovery, than as to their first Repentance; so we ought to consider, that there is such a *falling away*, mentioned by the *Apostle*, of those who have been once enlightned, of which, he saith, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance: and that Scripture deals with all persons in its exhortations, and admonitions, and threatnings, as if they were capable of falling to the utmost degree: and to suppose that thing impossible to be done, which the gravest counsels, and the most vehement perswasions are used to keep men from the doing of, is to make a severe reflection on the wisdom of them that give them. And the *Apostle* here leaves none of them out; but bids the most forward believers beware of an evil heart of unbelief; and those who had been most softened by repentance, take heed of being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. So that we see, how powerfull soever the motives to Vertue are; how great soever the encouragements against Sin; yet the *Apostle* thought it needfull to give them warning against the deceitfulness of sin.

2. But what kind of *deceitfulness* is this in sin, that the best and wisest men are so much caution'd against it? What irresistible charms doth it use to draw men into its snares? With what infusion doth it so far intoxicate mankind to make them dote upon it, against the convictions of Reason, and dictates of Conscience, and the power of Perswasion, and the most solemn and repeated Vows and Promises against it? Nay, to make men pursue it to such a degree, as rather to be damned for it than forsake it? If we were to consider this only by Reason, we could imagine nothing less than that sin at one time or other hath laid such a mighty obligation on mankind, that rather than part with it, the greater part of men, out of meer gratitude, would be content to suffer for ever with it: or, that it is a thing so absolutely necessary to the comfort of mens lives, that they cannot live one good day without it: Whereas in truth, the whole race of mankind hath suffer'd extremly and continually by it: and is so far from being necessary to the comfort of mens lives, that the greatest troubles and vexations of life have risen from it; and men may enjoy far greater satisfaction, and more real contentment; and more noble, and solid, and lasting pleasures if they did utterly renounce and forsake it. But this still makes the difficulty so much the greater, how it should so far bewitch and infatuate the far greatest part of mankind; and of those who know how dearly they must suffer for it in another World? And yet to assail this difficulty, we have only two Accounts to give how sin comes to deceive mankind so generally, so fatally; and those are 1. By subtle insinuations; 2. By false reasonings.

1. By subtle insinuations. The great Masters of pleading in ancient times have told us, that there are some Causes which are never to be managed

managed by plain and downright reasonings, (because they are too weak to bear that method of handling) and then they bid men have a care in their beginning, of coming close to the business; but they must fetch a compass about, and by secret arts and degrees insinuate themselves into the good opinion of the Judges before they are aware of it. This is the very method which is made use of by *the deceitfulness of sin*; it dares not stand the examination of any close reasoning, for all its artifices would presently be discover'd then; but it makes use of these arts of insinuation. 1. It endeavours to raise a good opinion of it self by false colours and representations of things. 2. When it hath done that, it draws men on by degrees to the practice of it. 3. When men are engaged in the practice of sin, then it represents to them how much it is their own interest to defend it, and so brings them from *the council of the ungodly, and the way of sinners, to the seat of the scornfull.*

1. It endeavours to raise a good opinion of it self by *false colours* and representations of things. The first precept of insinuation is to remove prejudice; for while that continues, all that can be said will be of no force. While men look on sin as vile, and loathsome; as mean and unworthy of a man; as inconsistent with the peace and contentment of their minds; so long temptations are easily resisted: all arts must therefore be used to make it appear with all the address and flattery which is most apt to entice a poor deluded sinner. Then, the fetters and shackles which it brings to enslave men with, must be looked on and admired as ornaments; its most sordid and filthy pleasures must be thought great and manly; and a little present honour and advantage appear more valuable than an eternal state of Happiness and Glory. These are things we should think it very hard for men to be deceived with; and yet every day we find they are so; and which is far more, they are ready to take it very ill of those who go about to undeceive them. In other cases, if a man tells another, that he is like to be deceived with a false and counterfeit Jewel instead of a true one; or to buy a bad Title to an Estate instead of a good one, he thinks himself very much obliged to him for his fidelity and kindness; only in the case of man's beloved sins, although they will prove the greatest cheats in the World to him, yet he cannot well endure to be told so; but his blood is apt to fire and enflame him into a passion against him that doth it; and although it be meant with the greatest innocency and kindness, it is ready to be interpreted to be only the effect of malice and ill will. For now sin hath insinuated it self so far into him, that no one can be thought a friend to the person, who is not so to his sins; and they are then come to that height of friendship and community of interests, to have common friends and common enemies. Now all the discourses of the freedom, and pleasure, and satisfaction of a man's mind in the practice of vertue appear very dull and insipid things; and fit only for *Learned Fools* or *Philosophers* to talk of.

Nothing deserves the name of *Liberty* with them, but a power of doing what they please. What nonsense and contradiction doth it seem to them for those to be accounted free, who are under any bonds or restraints? No matter to them, whether they be from God or Nature, from Reason or Conscience, as long as they are restraints, they look on them as inconsistent with their notion of liberty. And next to those who threaten men with punishments in another World for what they do amiss in this, they account those the greatest Fools that first found out  
the

the distinction of good and evil, and just and unjust in the actions of men. "What Fools (say they) were they to fasten dishonourable and reproachfull names on some of the most pleasant and beneficial actions of life? For thus a man is debarred that noble and manly Vice of Drunkenness for fear of losing the reputation of Sobriety; and the extravagancies of Lust, for fear of doing injury to his Neighbour's Bed; and supposing a man hath never so much advantages in his hands to enrich himself by defrauding another, yet he must not do it, because although an estate be in the keeping of a Fool, yet another must not be a Knave to get it from him. Thus do these miserable Slaves to Vice pity the weaknes of those who have so little wit (as they think) not to understand the Liberty they enjoy: But thus do mad men pity the dulness of those that are in their wits, that do not sing, and rant, and despise the World, as they do: and fancy themselves to be Kings and Princes, while they are tyed fast in their Chains, and lie in Straw. And upon such grounds as these, the most rude and barbarous *Indians* did better understand the liberty of mankind, than the most civilized Nations. For all civility is a debarring men of some part of this natural liberty, *i. e.* of those things which men have a power to do, and upon this ground all ancient Law-givers and Wise men, who by degrees brought several Nations to order and government, and to live by Laws, ought to be hated as the greatest Tyrants and Usurpers upon the liberties of mankind: and the natural consequence of this would be the overthrow of all Laws, and Order, and Government in the World. But if there must be some restraints upon men, then we are to consider what restraints are just and reasonable, within whose bounds we are to contain our selves; and whatever tends to the dishonour of God, to the injury of others, or to our own destruction, it is all the reason in the World we should abstain from. And if men would but do this, they would be kept from the practice of sin: And so this imaginary notion of a boundless liberty will appear to be only one of the *false colours* that sin puts upon evil actions, on purpose to tempt men to the commission of them.

But there is another Poison which more subtilly and dangerously insinuates it self into the hearts of men, and by which sin gets the possession there, and that is the *love of pleasure*: I do not mean the pleasure of the mind, or the pleasure of a good conscience, for there is no danger in these; but it is the love of sensual pleasure which is most apt to ensnare men in the practice of sin. It is under this representation chiefly, that sin deceives, betrays, entangles, bewitches, destroys the souls of men: It is this which fills the imagination, and darkens the understanding with filthy steams and vapours, and hurries a man on with the impetuous violence of passions, without considering the mischievous consequence which attends it, either as to his honour in this World, or his salvation in another. This danger which attends the pleasures of sin, was well represented in one of the *Eastern Parables of a man violently pursued by Wild Beasts to the top of a Precipice, where there was a Tree growing on the side of a great lake, and at the foot of it a prodigious Serpent lying ready to devour him; the man being in this astonishment gets upon the first branch of the tree he could reach; but he was no sooner there, but his horror increased at the apprehension of his danger on every side of him; and that which added the most to his consternation, was, that the very branch on which he stood was almost eaten off; while he was in this terrible fright, he*

PAROES  
Proleg. 3. c.  
10. ad Spe-  
cim. sapi-  
ent. vet. In-  
d. rum.

looks

looks up to the top of the tree, and there sees some wild honey trickling down the body of the tree, which he was so taken with, and so pleased with the sweetness of it, that he forgets his danger till of a sudden the branch breaks, and down he drops into the lake without recovery. This is the true representation of the pleasures of sin, which men are so much entertained with, that they never consider the hazard they run, and scarce think of their danger, till they drop into that state of misery from whence there is no redemption.

But besides these soft and voluptuous sinners, (who are easily deceived and hardly drawn out of the snares they fall into) there are others of a more busie, restless and designing temper, and to these sin appears under another shape to deceive them, with all the advantages of external Splendor and Greatness. And thus they who possibly might escape the baits of pleasure, are carried away by the more plausible temptations of Riches and Honour. It is supposed by some, that when the Devil tempted Christ with the offers of *the Kingdoms of this world*, if he Mat. 4. 8, 9. would fall down and worship him; he did not know who he was, but had a mind to try him by the most probable way of discovering what was within him: But surely the Devil thought him some extraordinary person, or else he would never have made so large an offer at first, *viz.* of no less than *all the Kingdoms of the World*, whereas very much less than one of these hath served to corrupt and debauch the minds of many who have been great pretenders to Piety and Vertue. It was indeed somewhat a hard condition the Devil joyned with his offer, *to fall down and worship him*, because he then designed not only a Victory but a Triumph; but with others he conceals the condition and draws them on by degrees, still rising higher and higher in his temptations, thereby feeding and enlarging their desires; till the love of this World hath gotten such an entire possession of their hearts, that they scarce ever in good earnest think of another till their souls are passing into it. And then it may be, they sadly reflect on their own folly, in that they have preferred the deluding scenes and pompous shews of worldly greatness, before the compleat and endless felicity of another life. But it very often happens, that it is not so long, as till their leaving this World, that men come to understand the restless folly of ambition. For the things of this World are like *Epicurus* his *Atoms*, always moving and jostling one against another; and one man's ambition serves to supplant another's; and they who cannot raise themselves may yet help to ruine others; and oftentimes those very designs by which they most hoped to advance themselves, prove the occasion of their fall and destruction. The *Mahometans* have a story to this purpose; Warn. Pro. Persi. p. 33. *In the time of Jesus, three men in a journey happened to find a Treasure; but being hungry, they sent one of their number to buy provisions; he consults how he might get this Treasure to himself, and for that end resolves to poison their meat; the other two agreed to share it between them, and to kill the third as soon as he returned, which they did, and themselves soon after died of the poisoned meat. Jesus passing by with his disciples, said, This is the condition of this world! see what the love of it hath brought these men to! Wo be to him that looks for any other usage from it.* This is the first way whereby sin doth insinuate into the minds of them; *viz.* by false colours and representations of things.

2. But when sin hath so far insinuated it self to bring men to a better opinion of it, it doth not presently hurry them on to the greatest height

of wickedness; but leads them gently and by easie steps and degrees, lest they should start back presently with the fright of some dreadful sin. Which will appear, if we consider how one comes to be corrupted by sin that hath had the advantage of a modest and vertuous education: if those who design to debauch him speak out at first in plain words what they aim at, a sudden horrour seizes upon him at the apprehension of it, and it may be he hates their company for ever after. But there is so much a sense of shame left in humane nature, that men dare not tempt others to sin, at least at first, in plain terms; and the same temptation which being represented one way would affright, appearing with greater art and dissimulation may easily prevail. And sin is a thing, that men hate to be forced, but too much love to be cheated into the practice of it. How doth a young sinner struggle with himself, and would if it were possible get out of the noise of his own Conscience, when he hath offered force and violence to it! He is very uneasy to himself, and wisheth a thousand times he had never committed the sin; rather than to feel such horror and disquiet in his mind, upon the sense of it. But if this doth not make him presently repent, and resolve never to be guilty again of the same folly, (as in all reason it ought to do) then by time and company he wears off the impression of his guilt, and the next occasion of sinning makes him forget the wounds of his Conscience, and the smart he endured before; and the fresh temptation revives the sense of his former pleasure, and then he is able to withstand no longer; and thus by repeating the same acts, by degrees he becomes a very hopeful sinner, and the reports of his Conscience are but like that of sounds at a greater distance; they lessen still more and more, till at last they cannot be heard at all. And when he hath thus mastered his Conscience, as to any one sin, which at first he was fearfull of committing, and hath found such an *Ice* upon his Conscience as will bear him, he goes on still farther and farther, till nothing be too hard for him. He that at first started and trembled at the hearing of an horrid oath, now can bear whole volleys of them discharged without shrinking; and can bear his part in that hellish *Concert*: and he that was so hardly brought to be wicked himself, may in a little time (as some men are strange proficients in wickedness) tempt and encourage others to the practice of it.

3. And when men are arrived to an habitual continuance in sin, then for their present ease and security, they cast about for any ways to defend it. For whatever is become of Conscience, they may have such a sense of reputation left, that they would not be thought *Fools*, and be contemned and despised by others. But although it be impossible for such to avoid scorn and contempt among all those who have any true regard to Vertue or Honour, yet they will endeavour rather to defend themselves in doing ill than recover their Reputation by Repentance. And because it would puzzle the wits of the most subtle and concerned persons to find out pretences and excuses for some kinds of sins; therefore the easiest way is to represent all the World as alike bad, altho' not alike cunning; and although it may be not in the same way, yet in something as ill in it self, but more agreeable to their Age, temper, and condition of life. Thus the greatest sinners love to herd themselves in a croud, and think it some poor defence for their sins, that they would have others believed to be as bad as they: as though a man were in the less danger by the Plague, because it is a general Contagion. But if it  
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happen that some persons in the World should have any reputation for vertue among them, then all the weakneses, and indiscretions of such, are sure to be enquired after, that so what is accounted vertue, may be thought only natural sourness of temper, or want of wit to be otherwise. But if any such should be found in a miscarriage, what Joy and Triumph doth this make? what load of circumstances and aggravations do they lay upon them; as though one single miscarriage of such persons were to weigh down a thousand enormities of theirs. And because it is impossible to defend their extravagant courses by *Reason*, the only way left for them is to make *Satyrical Invectives* against *Reason*; as though it were the most uncertain, foolish and (I had almost said) *unreasonable* thing in the World: and yet they pretend to shew it in arguing against it: but it is pity such had not their wish, *to have been beasts rather than Men*, (if any men can make such a wish that have it not already) that they might have been less capable of doing mischief among mankind; by representing all the excellencies of humane nature, which are *Reason*, and *Vertue*, and *Religion*, but as more grave and solemn fopperies. But how hard are such men put to defend their vices, that cannot do it, without trampling under foot the most noble perfections of their own nature!

These however are the more ingenuous sort of sinners, that yield *Reason* and *Religion* to be of *Vertue's* side; but there are others that make use of some shallow pretences of *Reason* to excuse themselves in their sins: which is the second way whereby sin deceives men, *viz.*

2. *By false Reasonings*: and those taken either, 1. From their present Impunity: 2. Or from their future Repentance.

1. From their *present Impunity* in sinning, men are apt to deceive themselves into a continuance in it. This is the account the Wise man hath long since given of mens being hardned in sin; *Because sentence* Eccl. 8.12. *against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore the hearts of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.* It seems somewhat hard to understand the consequence, why men should grow more desperately wicked, because God gives them a space to repent? Is it necessary that if God doth punish at all, he must do it presently? that would seem to be rage and fury, or a necessity of nature, and not justice. Cannot judgment be duly executed, unless the Judge break open the Prison-doors, and torment the Malefactor in his chains? Why may not God respite the punishment of sinners, when he pleases, to another state, since he hath declared *that he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the World* Acts 17.31. *in righteousness?* What incongruity is there in this to any principle of reason or justice? Will not this time of God's patience, be a sufficient vindication of his lenity and goodness in order to the drawing men to repentance? And will not the day of his future judgment be a full vindication of his justice? Will not the insupportable horrors of a miserable eternity discover far more God's abhorrence of sin, than present sufferings in this life, which, the greater they are, the less they continue? But all this false way of reasoning ariseth from that gross piece of self-flattery that such do imagine God to be like themselves; *i. e.* as cruel and revengefull as they are: and they presently think, if any persons did offend them at the rate that sinners are said to offend God, and they had so much power in their hands to punish them as he has, without any fear of revenge upon themselves, they would be sure to dispatch them presently; but because they see God doth it not, there-

fore they conclude that all the talk of God's anger and hatred against sin is without ground: and from hence they take encouragement to sin. Pſal. 50. 31. So the Pſalmiſt ſaith in God's name, *These things thou didſt and I kept ſilence*; and they preſently took his *ſilence* for *conſent*; for it follows, and *thou thoughteſt that I was altogether ſuch a one as thy ſelf*: but the Pſalmiſt adds, how ill he took this at mens hands, and that he would one day make them know the difference between the forbearance of ſinners, and the love of their ſins; *but I will reprove thee, and ſet them in order before thee*. And therefore he bids them be better adviſed, and *conſider this while they forget God, leſt he tear them in pieces, and there be none to deliver*.

2. Men are hardned by the deceitfulneſs of ſin, from the hopes of their *future repentance*. For that is one of the great cheats of ſin, that every one thinks he can repent and ſhake off his ſins when he hath a mind to do it. Sin doth not lie like a heavy weight upon their backs, ſo that they feel the load of it; and therefore they think it is eaſily removed, if they would ſet themſelves to it. Moſt of thoſe that believe a God and a judgment to come, and yet continue in ſin, do it upon this preſumption, that one time or other, they ſhall leave their ſins, and change the courſe of their lives before they go out of this World. They have not only thoughts of repentance, but general purpoſes of doing the acts of it at one time or other; but that time is not come, and God knows whether it ever will or no. For ſin entices them and draws them on ſtill; and when any motions towards repentance come into their minds, that preſently ſuggeſts, *It is time enough yet; why ſo much haſte? there will be trouble enough in it when you muſt do it, what need you bring it ſo faſt upon you? Are not you likely to hold out a great many years yet? what pity it is to loſe ſo much of the pleaſure of life, while you are capable of enjoying it? There is old Age coming, and when you will be good for nothing elſe, then will be time enough to grow wiſe and to repent*. But O fooliſh ſinner, who hath bewitched thee to hearken to ſuch unreaſonable ſuggeſtions as theſe are! For

3. In the laſt place, it ought to be our preſent, our conſtant, our greateſt care to prevent being *hardned by the deceitfulneſs of ſin*. For to this end, it is not enough to conſider of it at one time or other in our lives, but we muſt be *exhorting one another daily, while it is called to day, leſt any of us be hardned through the witchcraft and deceitfulneſs of ſin*: And if it be ſo much the duty of others to ſhew that regard to one anothers ſouls; how much more doth it become us to do it, who expect to be called to an account at the great day for the diſcharge of our truſt in this matter? It is a dreadful paſſage we read of in the Prophet Ezekiel, and enough to make our ears to tingle at the repeating it, *When I ſay unto the wicked, O wicked man thou ſhalt ſurely die, if thou doſt not ſpeak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man ſhall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand*. We would fain believe this to have been ſome particular and extraordinary commiſſion given to the Prophet by God himſelf, which doth not concern us; for what will become of us, if not only our own faults (which God knows are too many) but other mens ſhall be charged upon us? when either through neglect, or flattery, or fear of diſpleaſing, or for any mean and unworthy ends, we betray our truſt, and inſtead of preventing prove the occaſion of mens being too much *hardned through the deceitfulneſs of ſin*. But although we neither pretend to be *Prophets*, nor *Apoſtles*, yet  
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it is our Office to take care of the *Souls* of men, and can we discharge that, as we ought to do, if we do not with all faithfulness warn men of the danger they run into *through the deceitfulness of sin*? It were happy for us if we could say, *that all the Lord's people are holy*; for then we should have nothing to do, but to praise and commend their Vertues, which were an easie and a delightfull task: but what pleasure is it to rake into the Sores, or to reprove the Vices of a degenerate Age? to be thought troublesome and impertinent, if we do our duty; and men of no conscience, if we do it not? But our work is neither to libel our Auditors, nor to flatter them; neither to represent them as better, nor worse than they are; nor to charge them with more guilt than their own consciences do charge them with: but our business is, to beseech and exhort them by the mercies of God, by the sufferings of Christ, by the love and tenderness they have for their immortal souls, that they *would to day, while it is called to day, take heed lest they be hardned thro' the deceitfulness of sin.* And that will appear to be very reasonable on these considerations.

1. That none are out of the danger of it, while they live in this tempting World. What need have we to take care of being deceived by that, which hath been too hard for the *best*, the *wisest*, and the *greatest* of men? Man in his best state, even that of Innocency, was deceived by the insinuations of sin: when there was no matter within for the temptation to work upon, no reason suggested that could move a common understanding, no interest or advantage that could sway him; no other moving cause appears to us of that fatal Apostasie of *Adam*, but either the imagination of some unknown pleasure, or the bare curiosity of trying an experiment what the effects would be of tasting the *forbidden fruit*. And ever since so general hath the corruption of mankind been, so successfull have the artifices and deceits of sin been in the World, that the best of men have not wholly escaped them; but have sometimes fallen in those very Graces which have been most remarkable in them; as *Abraham* in his trust in God, *Moses* in his meekness, *Job* in his patience, *Peter* in his zeal for Christ. What cause then have others to look to themselves!

If wisdom and experience would have secured men, we should have thought, of all men in the World, *Solomon* the least in danger of being deceived by the insinuations of sin, who had given such excellent cautions against those very snares he fell into himself; and that to such a degree, that his case is left disputable to this day, whether he ever recovered by repentance or no. What numbers are there upon record of those mighty men, who have made the earth to tremble at the noise of their Armies; who have led Kings in chains after their Triumphal Chariots, and have been served by those whom others have adored; yet have, notwithstanding all this, been enslaved themselves by some mean lust, and destroyed by the power of an effeminate passion? What can be strong enough to resist those charms, which neither innocency, nor wisdom, nor power are sufficient security against? Nothing, but the *Grace of God*, and continual care of our selves.

2. The less men suspect their danger, the more cause they have to be afraid of it. None are more fatally deceived by sin, than those who apprehend no danger in it, or think they can escape it when they please. How strangely infatuated are those through *the deceitfulness of sin*, who think with themselves, after they have spent their lives in sin, they shall

shall make God amend by a few dying groans, and such a repentance as can have *no amendment of life*? Most men, who are the greatest slaves to their sins, are so much deceived by them, as to think they have them wholly at their command, and can when they please cast them off: and such imaginations keep them faster in subjection to them. For if they did apprehend themselves under such slavery, as really they are, they would grow weary and impatient of the yolk; whereas now because they are not forced to commit their sins, they suppose they can with ease forsake them. But none are such incurable Fools, as they that think themselves Wise; and none are so miserably deceived, as they that think themselves too cunning for their sins. If it be so easie to shake off your sins, remember that your condemnation will be so much more just, if you do it not; for God required no hard thing for you to do: and if it be so easie why is it not hitherto done? Why do you mock God so often, and pretend every year to repent, and yet are every year as bad if not worse than other? Why are not *the fruits of repentance* seen in the amendment of life for one year, or a month, or one bare week? Is it not worth while to do so little for him, that hath done so much for you? Methinks, common ingenuity might prevail with men, at least to let God have some part of their lives entire to himself, without interfering with the Devil. But therein lies a great part of the *deceitfulness of sin*, that it falls out here, as in some malignant Diseases, men seldom understand their danger, till they are almost past recovery.

3. None are so likely to be hardned in sin, as those who delay and put off their repentance. For the very putting it off is a sign that sin hath a greater power, than the convictions of Conscience: for why should men ever intend to repent, if they did not think it necessary? and if they think it necessary and yet do it not, it is plain there is something within them stronger than Conscience, which keeps them from it. So that he that intends to repent, and yet lives in sin, hath that aggravation of sin above others, that he sins against his Conscience all that time. Tell me then, O thou subtle sinner, that hopest to be too hard for God and for sin too, by enjoying thy sins as long as thou canst, and then repenting at last, to escape the vengeance of God: dost thou in good earnest intend ever to repent or no? If thou dost not, never deceive thy self; God will not accept these pretences and promises instead of real repentance. If thou dost intend it sincerely, what makes thee to intend it? is it not, that thou art convinced it is much better to be done than not, but canst not find it in thy heart to do it yet? Thou knowest all this while it were much better to leave thy sins, than to live in them, it were far better to be sober, and temperate, and pious, and devout, than to be debauched and profane; and yet for all this, thou dost not repent, but goest on in the same course. Consider then, that this very circumstance deeply aggravates every sin that is committed after it. For it is not a bare neglect of repentance, which thou art guilty of, but a contempt of God and Goodness; it is not only not repenting, but it is an obstinate and wilfull resolution of sinning: for there is no *medium* between living in sin and forsaking of it; and nothing deserves the name of Repentance, that is short of that. And if thou art so wilful and unreasonable now, as notwithstanding thy resolutions to repent, to live still in thy sins, how canst thou ever hope to repent at last when thy heart will be so much more hardned by continuance in sin?

4. Lastly,

4. Lastly, Consider the sad condition of those who are hardned through the deceitfulness of sin, They are said in Scripture to be *past feeling*, and to be given over to a *reprobate mind*, i. e. to have lost all sense of their danger, and of the ill condition they are in; they despise all means of instruction, and scorn all those who would do them good, and who mean them no other injury but to perswade them to be happy. With what disdain and contempt do those proud and lofty sinners, who are once arrived at this height of wickedness, look down upon all those, who endeavour by *Reason* and *Scripture* to convince them of their sins! As though it were not possible for any thing to make men seem more ridiculous to them, than to see them concerned to plead the cause of Vertue and Religion. “ To what purpose is all this about Repentance? why should not men be let alone to do as they think fit? “ for let them preach their hearts out, men will do as they please. This is the language of those who are already hardned in their sins; but God forbid, it should be so of any here present; who make it our prayer to God to be delivered from *hardness of heart, and contempt of his word and commandments*. And we have great reason so to do; for there is no judgment short of hell, like to the being given up to a *reprobate sense*: for all the most weighty arguments and most forcible perswasions are to such but like showers falling upon a Rock, that make some noise and slide off again, but make no impression or entrance into them. God Almighty give us all his Grace to understand our danger and to repent in time, that none of us be hardned through the deceitfulness of sin.

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# SERMON XVI.

Preached on the

## FAST-DAY,

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S<sup>t</sup>. Margaret's Westminster.

Novemb. 13. 1678.

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I SAM. XII. 24, 25.

*Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your King.*

Psa. 73. 17,  
22.

Prov. 19. 15.

**I**T hath been well observed by some, that those who look at a distance upon humane affairs are apt to think that the good or bad success of them depends wholly upon the Wisdom and Conduct of those who manage them; others who look nearer into them and discern the many intervening and unforeseen accidents which often alter and disappoint the Counsels of men, are ready to attribute the events of things rather to Chance than Wisdom: but those who have made the deepest search and the strictest enquiry, have most firmly believed a Divine Providence which over-rules all the Counsels and Affairs of Men; and sometimes blasts the most probable designs, sometimes prospers the most unlikely attempts, to let us see that though *there be many devices in mens hearts, yet the Counsel of the Lord that shall stand.* We live in an Age not over prone to admire and take notice of any remarkable instances of Divine Providence either in our preservation from dangers or deliverances out of them; for so great is the security of some men, that they are unwilling to apprehend any dangertill they fall into it, and if they escape will hardly believe they were ever in it; and such is the concernment of others, to baffle all evidences of truth wherein their own guilt is involved, that they all agree in robbing God of the honour of his Mercy, and our selves of the comfort of his Protection. But blessed be that God who hath hitherto defeated all the secret, and subtle, and cruel designs of his

his and our Churches enemies; and hath given us the liberty and opportunity of this day to meet together to implore the continuance of his favour and mercy towards us in the preservation of his Majesty's person; for in praying for him, we pray for our selves, since our own welfare doth so much depend upon His.

When we look back upon the *History* of this *Church* ever since the *Reformation* of it, we may observe such a wonderfull series of Divine Providence going along with it, that we have the less reason to be discouraged with present difficulties, or disheartned with the fears of future dangers. What struglings did it meet with in the Birth? And although it were therein like Jacob who took hold of the heel of his Brother, and at last obtained the blessing; yet the Romish party got the start like Esau, Gen. 25. and came forth all red and hairy, full of blood and cruelty; and the old Dragon cast out of his mouth a Flood of Fire to destroy our *Church* before it could attain to its full growth and maturity. But after it not only survived these flames, but enjoyed a firm establishment under the care and conduct of a wise and cautious Government, what restless endeavours, what secret plots, what horrid conspiracies, what foreign attempts, what domestick treasons were carried on during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth? And yet, which is very considerable, while she openly and heartily owned the *Protestant Cause*, it pleased God to deliver her out of all her dangers, and to give her a long and a prosperous Reign, when two of her Neighbour Princes were assassinated for not being zealous enough in the *Popish Cause* though they professed to own and maintain it. And it is but a very little time since you met together in this place to celebrate the memory of a mighty deliverance which both *King* and *Kingdom*, and together with them our *Church* received from that never to be forgotten conspiracy of the *Gunpowder Treason* in her Successor's Reign. May we not then take up St. Paul's argument, and say, *Who hath delivered us from so great death, and doth deliver, in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us?* 2 Cor. 1.10.

Especially if we do not fail in the performance of that duty which God expects from us in order to our own preservation, which is delivered by Samuel to the People of Israel, in the words of the *Text*:

*Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart, for consider how great things he hath done for you.*

But if they would not hearken to this wise Counsel, but go on in their sins, he tells them what the fatal consequence would be, not to themselves only, but to their *King* too:

*But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be destroyed both ye and your King.*

Which advice will appear to deserve our serious consideration this day, if we either regard, (1.) The *Person* who gave it. (2.) The *Occasion* of giving it. (3.) The *Matter* contained in it.

1. The *Person* who gave this Counsel to the People, Samuel; a Person of great Wisdom, and long experience in Government, and therefore very able to judge concerning the proper causes of a Nation's Prosperity and Ruine. The People had enjoyed a long and uninterrupted tranquillity while they followed his directions. They had before been miserably harassed by the inroads of the *Philistins*, discomfited in several battels, and at last the *Ark of God* itself taken by their enemies, and their leaders destroyed, at which sad news, *Eli, who had judged Israel forty years, fell backwards* and so ended his days: while they were

- v. 18. under the sense of their present miseries, *Samuel* puts them into the most hopeful way for their deliverance, which was by a reformation of Religion among them, by returning to the Lord with all their hearts, and putting away their strange gods, and preparing their hearts unto the Lord and serving him only; and then, saith he, *He will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistins.* The miseries they felt, and the dangers they feared made them own the true Religion with more than usual courage:
- t. 7. *Then the Children of Israel did put away Baalim and Astaroth, and served the Lord only.* But besides this, *Samuel* appoints a publick and solemn Feast of all *Israel* at *Mizpeh*; *And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord.* And they gathered together to *Mizpeh*, and drew water and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day and said there, *We have sinned against the Lord.* *Mizpeh*, a City in the confines of *Judah* and *Benjamin*, as *Masius* and others observe, was the place where the States of *Israel* were wont to be assembled together upon any great and important occasion; where there was a place on purpose for them to meet in, and an *Altar*, and *House of Prayer* for the publick Worship of *God*: and therefore it is said, *Judg. 20. 1. The Children of Israel gathered together from one end of the Land to the other, unto the Lord in Mizpeh*; and there the chief of all the Tribes of *Israel* presented themselves in the Assembly of the People of *God*. And therefore *Samuel* chuseth this as the fittest place for them to fast and pray, and confess their sins in, and to implore the Mercy of *God* to the Nation. We do not read in Scripture of any more publick and solemn Fast of the People of *Israel* kept with greater signs of true humiliation than this at *Mizpeh* was; for the pouring out of water was used among them either to represent their own desperate condition without *God's* help, that they were as water spilt upon the ground; or the greatness of their sorrow for their sins, and the floods of tears which they shed for them. And to let mankind see what influence a general and serious Fasting and Humiliation hath upon the welfare of a Nation, we find from the day of this Fast at *Mizpeh* the Affairs of *Israel* began to turn for the better. For the *Philistins* thought they had an advantage against the *Israelites* by this general meeting, and hoped to surprize them while they kept their Fast in *Mizpeh*; and made such an Incurfion upon them, as put them into a great consternation; and they came trembling to *Samuel*, praying him that he would not cease to cry unto the Lord their God for them, that he would save them out of the hand of the *Philistins*. *Samuel* prays, the Lord hears, *Israel* marches out of *Mizpeh*, pursues the *Philistins* and smites them; and *Samuel* sets up a stone of remembrance and calls it *Eben-Ezer*, saying, *Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.* Yea, from henceforward did *God* help them, for it follows, *so the Philistins were subdued, and they came no more into the Coast of Israel; and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistins all the days of Samuel.* Never any People had greater reason to be pleased with a Governour than they had with *Samuel*; who managed their affairs with so much wisdom and piety, with so much faithfulness and integrity, with so much courage and constancy, with so much care and industry, with so much success and prosperity. But people are apt to surfeit upon too much ease and plenty, and to grow wanton with abundance of peace; they began to be weary of *Samuel's* Government, and secretly to wish for a change. And when mens discontents grow ripe, there seldom wants a plausible occasion to vent them: *Samuel was grown old and could not*
- Masius Jof. 18. 21.
- Drus in Jud. 20.
- 1 Sam. 7. 7.
- v. 8.
- v. 9.
- v. 11.
- v. 12.
- v. 13.
- v. 16.



go about *from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh*, as i Sam 8. 2. he was want to do, but fixed *at his house in Ramah, and placed his Sons in Beersheba*; these not following their Father's steps, were soon accused of male-administration; and nothing would now satisfy the discontented *Elders of Israel*, but *Samuel himself must be discharged of his Government*; *For they gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel in Ramah; and said to him, Behold thou art old, and thy Sons walk not in thy ways*; this was their pretence, but their design was to alter the Government. Their plenty and prosperity had made them fond of the *Pomp and Grandeur of their Neighbour Nations*, and whatever it cost them, they were resolved to have a *King to judge them like all the Nations*. *Samuel tells them, what inconveniences that more absolute form of Government of the Neighbour Nations would bring among them*, as From v. 10. to v. 19. *Josephus shews*; all which signified nothing to them; for it is said, *Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel, and said, Nay, but we will have a King over us, that we also may be like all the Nations*. Joseph. Ant. 1. 6. c. 4. v. 19, 20. It was not the Monarchical way of Government that was so displeasing to *God or Samuel*; for their Government was of that *Form already, God himself being their King, and appointing such Vicegerents as he thought fit to manage their affairs under him*. Ch. 12. 13. So *God answered Samuel, They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them*. 8. 7. Not as though Kingly Government were inconsistent with *God's Sovereignty over his people*; for by him *Kings Reign*; and they are *his Ministers to us for good*, and that Government is the most agreeable to his own, and to the primitive institution of Government among men. But wherein then lay this great sin of the *Israelites in asking a King*, when *God himself had provided by his Law*, that they should have a *King when they were settled in their own Land*? Deut. 17. 14. And yet we find the *Israelites at last confess, We have added unto all our sins this evil to ask us a King*. 12. 19. Their great fault was, that they were so impetuous and violent in their desires, that they would not wait for *Samuel's decease whom God had raised up among them, and whose Government had been so great a blessing to them*; and therefore *God looked on it as a rejecting him more than Samuel*, since he had appointed him; and they had no reason to lay him aside for his Sons faults, but they made use of that only as a colour for their own self-willed humour and affectation of being like to other *Nations*. However *God commands Samuel to yield to them*; and he appoints another meeting at *Mizpeh*, for this purpose; where the Person was chosen by lot; and at his solemn inauguration at *Gilgal, Samuel makes that speech unto all Israel* contained in this 12th Chapter; whereof the words of the *Text* are the conclusion; which make these words the more considerable,

2. In regard of the *Occasion* of them; being delivered by *Samuel* at so great a Solemnity in which he delivers up the *Government* into the hands of their *King*, (1.) With a great protestation of his own integrity, with an appeal to their own Consciences concerning it, and they freely give a large testimony of it. (2.) He upbraids them with their ingratitude towards *God time after time*; that they were never contented or pleased with his *Laws or the Governours he raised up amongst them*; and now at last upon a sudden fright concerning *Nabash the King of Ammon*, they were resolved they would have a *King*; and *behold, saith he, the Lord hath set a King over you*. (3.) Notwithstanding their sin in so unseasonable a demand, yet he tells them they might be happy

under his Government if they did sincerely keep to their established Religion and obey the laws of God. This he delivers,

(1.) More Generally, vers. 14, 15. *If ye will fear the Lord, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebell against the Commandment of the Lord, then shall both ye and also the King that reigneth over you, continue following the Lord your God; i. e. God will protect and defend you. But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebell against the Commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your Fathers.* But this being a matter of the greatest consequence to them, whereon the welfare of the Nation did depend, he delivers it,

(2.) More *Emphatically*; after the Thunder and Reign had affrighted and softned their hearts; and they came praying to Samuel and confessing their sin to him; then he counsels them *not to fear*, if they did *not forsake God*; and for his part, however they had disobliged him, he would not only continue to pray for them, but give them the best advice and directions he could: *But I will teach you the good and the right way.* And then these words immediately follow, *Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart, &c.*

3. These words are most considerable for the *Matter* contained in them; which lies in these three particulars.

(1.) The influence which continuance in sin hath upon a Kingdom's ruine; *but if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your King.*

(2.) The best means for the welfare and preservation of it, *viz. maintaining and practising the true Religion; Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart.*

(3.) The great argument and encouragement here given for the doing it; *for consider how great things he hath done for you.*

The first of these will be the main Subject of my present Discourse, *viz. The influence which continuance in sin hath upon a Kingdom's ruin.* If we believe Moses and the Prophets, we cannot question the truth of this concerning the *People of Israel*; for this is the main scope and design of their doctrine. Moses assured them, that all the strength, and force, and combination of their enemies should do them no prejudice as long as they obey'd the *Laws of God*; but if they would not do his Commandments, but despise his *Statutes* and abhor his *Judgments*, all the care and policy they could use would not be able to keep off the most dismal judgments which ever befell a *Nation*: *I will even appoint over you terrour, consumption and the burning Ague; that shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart; and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you, and you shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you, and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. And if you will not for all this hearken unto me, then will I punish you seven times more for your sins,* so he proceeds to the end of the *Chapter*, still rising higher and higher, according to the greatness of their provocations. And to the same purpose he speaks throughout *Deut. 28.* promising great *Blessings* to their Nation upon obedience, and horrible *Curses*, such as would make ones ears tingle to hear them, upon their refractoriness and disobedience, *The Lord shall send thee cursing, vexation and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do; until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly, because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me.* To the same

Lev. 26.  
from v. 3  
to 14.  
v. 15.

v. 16.

v. 17.

v. 18.

Deut. 28.  
20.

same purpose all the *Prophets* speak, only applying this general doctrine to the circumstances of their own times. *If ye be willing and obedient, saith Isaiah, ye shall eat the good of the Land; but if ye refuse and rebell, ye shall be destroyed with the sword, the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

When the Prophet *Jeremiah* saw dreadfull calamities coming upon his people, he cries out, *Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart.* *Ezekiel* tells them there was no hope to escape being destroyed, but by speedy and sincere Repentance, *Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin.*

But here a material question may be asked, whether this connection between their *doing wickedly*, and *being consumed* were not by vertue of that political *Covenant* between God and the people of *Israel* which was peculiar to themselves; and how far it may be just and reasonable to argue concerning the case of other *Nations*, with whom God hath entered into no such *Covenant*, as he did with them?

To make this clear, and to bring it nearer to our own case, I shall proceed in this method.

1. To shew, that God doth exercise a *particular providence* with respect to the *state and condition* of *Kingdoms and Nations*.

2. That according to the *usual method* of *Providence* their condition is better or worse as the *People* are.

3. That there are some *circumstances* of sinning, which do very much portend and hasten a *Peoples* ruin.

1. That God doth exercise a *particular providence* with a respect to the *state and condition* of *Nations*, i. e. as they are united into several and distinct bodies, which are capable as such of being happy or miserable. For since mankind's entring into *Society* is both necessary and advantageous to them; and God doth not barely permit and approve, but dispose and incline men to it; and hath given them *Laws* to govern themselves by, with respect to *society*; it is but reasonable to suppose that God should call men to an account in that capacity; and to distribute rewards and punishments according to the nature of their actions; which must either be done in this world, or it cannot be done at all; for all those bonds are dissolved by death, and men shall not answer for their sins by *Kingdoms and Nations* in another world, *but every man shall give an account of himself unto God.* Either therefore those *societies* as such shall go wholly unpunished, or they must suffer according to them in this world; and therefore here the case is very different from that of particular Persons. We say, and with a great deal of reason, that it is no disparagement to the Justice of God's Providence for good men to suffer, or for wicked men to escape punishment in this Life, because the great day of recompence is to come, wherein there will be a *Revelation of the righteous judgment of God*: But that will not hold as to *Nations*, who shall not suffer in communities then as they have sinned here: and therefore it is more reasonable to suppose the rewards and punishments of such shall be in this life according to the measure and proportion of their sins. And of this we have sufficient evidence in Scripture, upon these accounts.

(1.) Because it charges *guilt* upon *Nations* as well as upon particular Persons. And in case of *uncertain murder*, *If one be found slain in the Land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him: the Elders of the next City were not*

v. 8. only to protest their own *innocency*, but to use this Prayer; *Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them, so shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you.* Here we see the guilt of innocent blood goes farther than the bare shedders of it, it lies upon the Nation till it be expiated; and the Jews say, the soul of a person innocently murder'd hovers up and down the earth crying for vengeance, till the guilty persons be found out and punished; and then it ascends above to its place of rest. The guilt of innocent blood is indeed a crying sin; it cries loud unto Heaven for vengeance, and nothing stops its voice but the execution of it. And Numb. 35. where that is not done, it leaves a *guilt upon the Land*; for God himself hath said it, *Blood defileth the Land; and the Land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.* This sin we see, is of such a malignant nature, that it infects the Land where it is committed, and lies upon it till it be expiated. But there are other *sins* which contract a *National guilt*, when the *Authority* of a *Nation*, either gives too much countenance and encouragement to the practice of them, or does not take that care it ought to do to suppress and punish them. When men daily and insolently break the *Laws of God*, and bid as it were defiance both to them and to the *Laws of men*; when wickedness spreads like a *leprose*, and infects the whole body; when vices become so notorious that they are a reproach and a by-word to Neighbour Nations; these are the signs and tokens of *National guilt*.

(1.) Because the *Scripture* tells us of a certain *Measure* to which the *sins* of a Nation do rise before they are ripe for punishment. This was the reason given why *Abraham's Children* must stay to the fourth *Generation* before they come to the possession of the promised *Land*, for the *iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full*. Where it is plain that God doth consider Nations as distinct bodies, the measure of whose sins is taken after another manner than that of particular persons; but when once that measure is compleated, ruin and destruction is unavoidable; or at least, some signal and extraordinary judgments falling upon them as the punishment of their iniquities. Men may ask why the *Canaanites* in *Joshua's* time were dealt with so severely, that nothing but utter extirpation would satisfy the Justice of God against them? But God prevents that objection by letting *Abraham* know how much patience and long-suffering he used towards them, waiting till the fourth *Generation*; and when their *iniquities* still encreased, and every Age added to the guilt of the foregoing, the burden grew too heavy for them to bear it any longer, and therefore they must sink under the weight of it. So our Saviour saith to the Jews in his time, *Fill ye up then the measure of your Fathers*. Not as though God did punish any Age beyond the desert of its own sins; but when the measure of their sins is filled up, God doth no longer forbear to punish them; and that seldom happens, but when the sins of that time do exceed those of the foregoing *Generations*; as it was in the case of the *Jews* when their *City* and *Temple* were destroyed.

(2.) Because it attributes the great *Revolutions of Government* to a particular *Providence of God*, *God is the Judge*, or the supreme Arbitrator of the affairs of the world, *he pulleth down one and setteth up another*. Which holds with respect to *Nations* as well as particular persons. Which doth not found any right of *Dominion* (as some fancied till

till the argument from *Providence* was returned with greater force upon themselves) but it shews that when God pleases to make use of *Persons* or *Nations* as the *Scourges* in his hand to punish a *People* with, he gives them success above their hopes or expectations: but that *success* gives them no right. And of this the *Psalmist* speaks when he adds, *For in the hand of the Lord there is a Cup, and the Wine is red; it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same; but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out and drink them.* It is called by *Isaiab*, the *Cup of Fury*, and the *Cup of Trembling*, which God gives to *Nations* destined to ruin: which makes them like people intoxicated and deprived of that apprehension of danger, of that judgment and consideration to prevent it, which at other times they have. When a *Nation* is near some dreadfull calamity, as a just punishment of its sins; *God* takes away the wisdom of the *Wise* and the understanding of the *Prudent*, and the resolution of the men of courage, that they all stand amazed and confounded, not knowing how to give or take advice; but they are full of fears, and rather apt to quarrel with one another than to consult the general good. This was just the state of *Egypt* when *God* did purpose to execute his *Justice* upon it.

(1.) First, their courage failed them, *And the heart of Egypt shall melt, in the midst of it; and the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof. In that day shall Egypt be like unto women; and it shall be afraid and fear, because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of Hosts, which he shaketh over it.* It is a very ill sign when men want the spirit and vigour they were wont to have; when they are daunted at the apprehension of every danger, and rather meanly seek to save themselves by base arts and sordid compliances, than to promote the common welfare. It is folly and stupidity not to apprehend danger when there is cause for it, and to take the best care to prevent it; but it is a fatal symptom upon a *Nation* when their hearts fail them for fear, that they dare not do the duty which they owe to *God*, to their *King*, and to their *Country*. *God* forbid that any should exceed the bounds of their duty to prevent their fears, but when men want resolution to do that, they are in a lost condition.

(2.) Their *Counsels* were divided and infatuated: *And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians. The Princes of Zoan are Fools, the Counsel of the wise Cancellors of Pharaoh is become brutish; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the Tribes thereof. The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof, and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a reeling man staggereth in his vomit, i. e. they know not what to fix upon, all their Counsels being so uncertain; and the best taking no effect. But after all their consultations, they advance not one step forward, but fall back just to the same case they were in before; every one blaming another for want of success in their designs. This is the deplorable state of a *People* when ruin and desolation is near them.*

But on the other side, when *God* raises up a *Nation* to be a *Scourge* to other *Nations*, he inspires them with a new spirit and courage, unites their counsels; removes their difficulties or carries them easily through them, and by a concurrence of some happy circumstances gives them strange success beyond all their hopes and expectations. Look over all the mighty *Revolutions* which have hapned in the *Kingdoms* and *Empires* of the *World*, and the more ye search and consider and compare things together, the greater truth you will find in this observation.

When

When God designed to punish the *Eastern Nations* for their transgressions, then the *Babylonian Monarchy* rose so fast and spread so far, that nothing was able to stand before it. The combinations of the *Kings of Judah, and Edom, and Moab, and Tyre, and Sidon, and Egypt*, were but like the *Withs which the Philistins bound Sampson with, which he brake in sunder as a Thread of Tow is broken when it toucheth the fire*. Judah drinks first of the *Cup*, and she trembles and falls, and is carried into captivity; then follow, as God had foretold by his *Prophets*, the desolations of *Tyre, of Egypt, of Put and Lud, i. e. of Libya and Ethyopia*; and at last the *Cup passes round, and Nineveh's turn comes to drink deep of this Cup of Fury*; and she was laid wast for returning to her sins after Repentance.

And when the sins of *Babylon* called for vengeance, God raised up *Cyrus*, and called him by his *Name*, long before he was born, and brought the fierce nations of the *East* to submit themselves to him: and when *Babylon* was most secure, full of Wine and Jollity at an anniversary feast, he led *Cyrus* into the *City* by a way they dreamed not of, and all the plagues which the *Prophets* had foretold, came upon that people when they least expected them. It was not the *Courage and Spirit of Alexander* with his *Macedonian Army* could have made such sudden and easie conquests of the *East*; if God by his Providence had not strangely made way for his success by infatuating the *Counsels of Darius*, so as to give him those advantages against himself he could never have hoped for. There is no such mighty difference in the wits and contrivances of men; no such great advantages in military power and conduct; no such wonderful disproportion in the courage, or wisdom, or educations of men; but when God hath pleased to let loose the most rude, and barbarous, and unexperienced Nations in matters of War, upon the most flourishing Kingdoms, the most disciplin'd Armies, the most fortified Cities, they have in spite of all opposition over-run, overcome, and overthrown them. Who could have thought that the cowardly *Goths* (as they were then esteemed) the barbarous *Vandals*, and the despicable *Hunns*, could have made such havock and devastations in the *Roman Empire*, that in fifty years time, more of it was lost and destroyed by their means, than had been gained in a thousand? It would make ones heart bleed to read the miseries which all the parts of the *Roman Empire* suffered, where these *Barbarians* prevailed; and yet they were despised and reproached by the *Grave and Wise Romans* at the same time when they were conquered and destroyed by them; as *Salvian* who lived then, at large relates. But the best and wisest men could not but see an extraordinary hand of God going along with them; and one of their greatest *Generals* found himself carried on by such a mighty impulse, and met with such an unaccountable success in all his undertakings, that he called himself *Flagellum Dei*, The *Scourge in God's hand* to chastise the wickedness and follies of men that called themselves *Christians*, and did not live like such. *Machiavel* himself takes notice of so strange a difference in the conduct and success of the *Romans* at different times, that he saith, *they could hardly be imagined to be the same People*; and after all his attempts to find out other causes, he at last is forced to conclude that there is a *superiour cause* to the Counsels of Men which governs the affairs of mankind which he calls *Fate*, and we much better, the *Providence of God*. Some learned *Physicians* are of opinion, that when diseases are not curable by common remedies, there is in them *τὸ Θεῖον*, something divine,

Salvian de  
Gub. Dei,  
l. 7.

Disput. in  
Liv. l. 2.  
c. 29.

H. Jordanus de eo  
quod in  
morbis est  
divinum,  
Conring.  
Epi. l. 29.

divine, and therefore in such cases *Divine Remedies* are the most proper and effectual: thus in the alterations of *States* and *Kingdoms*, there is often a *τὸ Θεῖον*, a more than ordinary *hand of God*, in which cases the best means we can use to prevent danger is by *Fasting* and *Prayer*, by true *Repentance* and speedy *Reformation* of our evil ways.

(4.) Because the Scripture still leaves hopes of Mercy to a People where they have a heart to repent, I do not find by any declaration of God's Will in Scripture, that he hath made any such peremptory decree concerning the ruin of a Nation, but upon their repentance there is a way left to escape it; but rather the contrary in those words of *Jeremiah*, *At what instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it: If that Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil which I thought to do unto them.* Jer. 18. 7. 8. And therefore all threatnings of that kind are conditional, as this in the text is, *But if ye shall still do wickedly:* which implies that if they did cease to do so, they might be preserved both they and their King. And where repentance hath intervened between the threatening and execution of judgment, God hath shewed wonderful kindness either in stopping, removing, or deferring the severity of judgments.

1. In stopping his hand when it hath been lifted up, and just ready to strike. We can desire no clearer instance in that case than that of *Nineveh*; a vast City (or rather a Country inclosed in *Walls*) full of all the delights of *Asia*, and of the sins which usually attend them; to this City God sends a Prophet to let them know how near they were to destruction, that *they had but forty days time* to turn themselves in. This was a strange and unexpected alarm to them, given by a strange Prophet after a peremptory manner to a people unacquainted with such messages. How many objections would the Infidels and Scepticks of our Age have made against such a Message as this? They would rather have concluded the Prophet *Mad*, than have been perswaded to repent by him. Yet so great was the apprehension they had of the just desert of their sins, that the *People of Nineveh believed God and proclaimed a Fast, and put on Sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least: and they cried mightily to God, and turned from their evil ways:* And what then? v. 5. v. 8. v. 10. Would God disparage the reputation of his Prophet, and alter the sentence he had sent him so far to denounce against them? What hopes had he given them of mercy if they repented? It appears they had nothing but general presumptions, *Who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not?* v. 9. Yet sincere repentance being performed upon no greater assurance than this, prevailed so with God, that he repented of the evil that he said he would do unto them, and he did it not. O the depth of the riches both of the *Wisdom* and *Goodness of God!* His *Wisdom* in leading them to repentance; his *Goodness* in forbearing to punish after so great provocations. What encouragement doth God hereby give to others to repent, when *Nineveh* was rescued from the very brink of destruction by it?

2. In removing his hand when it hath struck. When *David's* vanity transported him so far, that without any necessity he would know the *Number* of his People; his heart did misgive him as soon as he had done it, and he confessed he had sinned greatly in it; notwithstanding this, God 2 Sam. 24. 10. sends a plague among the people, which touched *David* to the quick, as a tender *Father* is most sensibly punished in the loss of his *Children*; and

v. 17. and then he cryed, *Loe I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these Sheep what have they done?* And when the Angel had stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented him of the evil, and said to the Angel, *It is enough, stay now thy hand.* Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell severity; but towards Jerusalem goodness. His severity was intended to make people avoid a vain confidence in their own strength and numbers; his goodness to let them see how ready he is to draw back his hand when men truly repent.

3. In putting by the stroke for the present, or deferring the execution of his wrath. No King of Israel provoked God more than Ahab; <sup>1 King 16.</sup> for it is said of him, *that he did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him; and that he sold himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord.* At last the Prophet *Elijah* meets him in *Naboth's Vineyard* which he had just taken possession of by fraud and violence; when <sup>v. 33.</sup> *Ahab* saw such an unwelcome Guest in that place, his guilt made him <sup>21. 25.</sup> ready to start back, and to say, *Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?* The Prophet having this fair opportunity followed the blow he had given him so home, that *Ahab* was not able to stand before him: for it is said, <sup>v. 20.</sup> that when *Ahab* heard the terrible judgments God denounced against him for his sins, <sup>v. 19.</sup> *he rent his cloaths, and put Sackcloth upon his flesh and fasted, and in good earnest humbled himself before God;* For so God himself owns that he did. I do not say he continued good after this; but he now heartily repented for the time; and for the time of repentance God enlarged his time of forbearance. *Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days.* Even a short repentance, when sincere, gains time, by a reprieve from punishment. When the sins of a Nation are grown to a great height, and become ripe for vengeance, the best Princes can obtain no more than not seeing the evil in their own days, as in the case of *Josiah* who was an excellent Prince, and a true lover of God and his Law, yet the people continued so hardened in their sins, though under some shew of Reformation; that the <sup>2 King 22.</sup> Prophets told him; *Behold I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the Inhabitants thereof, &c.* But because his heart was tender, and he humbled <sup>16.</sup> himself before the Lord, he obtained that favour, *that his eyes should not see the evil which he would bring upon them.* If the People had been as good as *Josiah* was, there is no question, but even then God would have repented of the evil; but where there was such an obstinate impenitency, that neither God's Laws, nor the Prophets threatnings, nor the Princes example could prevail upon them; all that his humiliation could obtain, was only a putting it off for his own time; and we have reason to think that their sins did hasten his end too; as sometimes the sins of a people make the best of Princes to be taken away from them: and <sup>2 Kin. 17.</sup> when the ten Tribes were carried captive, their King *Hoshea* is said, <sup>21.</sup> *not to have done evil as the Kings of Israel that were before him.* And to *Judah* after *Josias* his death, God punctually made good his threatning in the Text, *But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed both ye and your King.*

II. The second particular is, That according to the usual method of Providence the state or condition of a People is better or worse according to the general nature of their Actions. If they be good and virtuous, careful to please God, just, sober, chaste, mercifull, diligent observers of God's Laws and their own, and dealing with other Nations according



according to the Laws of Nations, they will live in a much more flourishing and happy condition; than a Nation can do where Atheism, Profaneness, and all sorts of Wickedness abound: which I shall prove two ways.

(1.) *Absolutely*, from the tendency of Religion and Vertue to promote the Honour, the Peace, the Courage and Safety of a People.

(2.) *Comparatively*, that Nations are more or less happy according to their virtues and vices.

(1.) *Absolutely*, and that will appear, (1.) From the tendency of true Goodness and Piety to promote a Nation's *Honour* and *Interest* abroad. And no man is ignorant how much *Reputation* brings of real advantage to a Nation; and that a People despised are next to a People enslaved; and that it is impossible to hold up honour and esteem in the World, where the reputation of Vertue is lost.

(2.) From its tendency to maintain *peace* and *tranquillity* at home; preventing private quarrels, by justice, and honesty, and temperance, and chastity; and publick disturbances by avoiding idleness, and debauchery, and bad principles, which are the great nurseries of Rebellion; and teaching men quietness, patience, due government of themselves, and obedience *not only for wrath, but also for Conscience sake*. Whereas loose principles, and bad practices, and extravagant desires naturally dispose men to endeavour changes and alterations, in hopes of bettering themselves by them; and the prevalence of Vice doth unhinge Government, and weaken the strength and sinews of it.

(3.) From the keeping up the *spirits*, and securing the safety of men. A good Conscience makes a man dare to do his duty; but *the sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprized the Hypocrites*. These were men, saith *Grotius*, who carried a fair shew for the present, but were inwardly prepared, if the *King of Babylon* got the better, to be of his *Religion*, whatever it was. Such men who are false to God, and really of no Religion at all, are full of thoughts and fears, not knowing what may happen; they dare not own what they would be, for fear it ruin them at present; and they dare not appear too much for what they seem to own, for fear of what may come hereafter. *If the Lord be God, saith Elijah, then follow him; but if Baal then follow him*: No, say such men, if they durst speak their thoughts, we desire to be excused at present, we find there is a contest between them, and we do not yet know which will get the better, when we see that, you shall know our minds. As *Asinius Pollio* told *Augustus* in his Wars with *Anthony* he was resolved to be *præda victoris*, he would be of the Conqueror's side. But men that are sincere in any Religion, do hate and abhor such hypocritical Dissemblers, and despise and spue them out for their nauseous lukewarmness; and as men indeed of no Religion or Conscience, but for what serves to their present ends. But observe in what a lofty strain the Prophet sets forth the security and confidence which follows integrity. *He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly, he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and stoppeth his eyes from seeing evil. He shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks, bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure*. These were very critical and doubtful times which the Prophet speaks of, and many were secretly for complying with the *King of Assyria*, as believing it as impossible to withstand his force, as to dwell with everlasting burnings; the Prophet

phet is so far from granting this, that he tells them all their security lay in being just and honest, and doing their duty, and then they would be as safe, as if they had constant provision among the most inaccessible Rocks. It is observable concerning the *Israelites*, that when they went about to secure themselves by subtle devices and contrivances of their own, making leagues and confederacies with the King of *Egypt* and other neighbour Princes, so often they were foiled, and baffled, and overcome by their enemies; but when they put their trust in *God*, and committed themselves to his protection, he preserved and delivered them from the greatest dangers. I will not deny that there was something peculiar in their case, having the Prophets directions; and to trust mans wisdom against God's was madness and folly in them. But setting that aside, as there is no security like to God's protection, so there is no reason to think that will be wanting to them who do their duty sincerely and put their trust in him.

(2.) *Comparatively*; If we do compare several Nations together, we shall find those to flourish most, and to be the most happy where men do most *fear God and work righteousness*; where piety and vertue have the greatest countenance and encouragement; and where vice and wickedness are the most discouraged and punished.

This may seem a *Paradox* at first hearing to those who consider by what ways of fraud and violence, of injustice and cruelty, of rapine and oppression, the great and mighty Empires of the world have been raised and maintained; and how little regard is shewed to any rules of Honesty, Justice, or the Laws of Nations in those Kingdoms and States which resolve to be great, and in spite of other Nations to maintain their Greatness.

Yet notwithstanding this plausible objection, the truth of my assertion will appear, if we understand it as we ought to do with these following Cautions.

1. That it is not to be understood of the largeness of dominion, or superfluity of riches, but of the true happiness of living in society together; which is by promoting the real *good* of all. To which the vastness of Empire, and immensity of riches is by no means necessary, but a sufficiency both of strength and treasure to defend it self in case of foreign enemies, and to provide for the necessities and conveniencies of all the Members of it. Those who have best consider'd these things, suppose that to be the most exact and perfect Idea of Government, where all things are in a certain measure, and have a proportion to each other so as most conduces to the true end of living; not to riot and luxury, not to softness and effeminacy, not to pride and ambition, not to the heaping up of riches without use and respect to a general good; but so as all men may according to their conditions and circumstances enjoy what they have or can get, with the greatest comfort to themselves and their friends, and do the most generous and vertuous actions.

*Arist. Pol.*  
l. 4. c. 11.

2. That this is not to be understood of the private benefit of any particular persons, but of the *general good* of all sorts and conditions of men. The Eastern Monarchies have seem'd to be the most happy and flourishing to those who look at a distance upon them, and only observe the *Pomp* and *Grandeur* of their *Princes*, without looking into the *State* and *Condition* of the *People*. *Aristotle* observes, that *the Eastern people had more wit and slavery with it, the Northern had less quickness*

*Pol. l.*  
c. 14.

ness and more liberty, the Greeks lying between both, had their share in both. But the Eastern slavery hath brought Barbarism into Greece it self; and the Northern Liberty hath so improved the wits, and given such encouragement to the industry of men, that our people at this day enjoy more benefit by the riches of the East, than those do among whom they grow. Can we call them a happy people that see much riches and enjoy none; having nothing which they can call their own, unless it be their slavery? That is certainly the happiest condition of a People, where the Prince sits upon the Throne of Majesty and Power, doing righteousness and shewing kindness; and the People sit every man under his Vine, and under his Fig-tree, enjoying the fruits of his own labours, or his Ancestor's bounty: Where the people think it their interest to support and obey their Prince; and the Prince thinks it his interest to protect and defend his People. *Happy is the People that is in such a case;* Ps. 144. 15. but above all, *happy is that people whose God is the Lord.* For without his blessing, the best Government, the best Laws, the best Ministers can never preserve a Nations happiness; and there is no reason to expect his Blessing, but in the ways of Piety and Vertue.

3. That it is not to be understood of sudden and surprizing events, but of a *lasting and continued state.* For when God had been highly provoked to punish several Nations for their sins; he may give unexpected success to that Nation by whom he designs to punish the rest; and when they have done that work, they may then suffer more smartly for their own iniquities. Of this we have a remarkable instance in Scripture; God designed to punish the Kingdoms of the earth for their sins; to this purpose he raiseth up Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon, whom he therefore calls *his Servant*; and the first example of his severity was his own People; when this was done, then follow the desolations of Egypt, of Phœnicia, Arabia, and other Countries in so strange a manner, that some have call'd it *the Age of the destruction of Cities.* But doth the King of Babylon think to escape himself? No, saith the Prophet, *the King of Shesbach shall drink after them*; his turn would come at last, when he had accomplished the design God sent him upon in the punishment of others. Thus for a time, a Nation may seem to flourish exceedingly, and be victorious over others while they are as *Scourges in God's hand* for the punishment of others, and when that work is over may suffer most severely for their own sins. Jer. 25. 26. v. 9. v. 11. Marsh Chr. Can. p. 556. Jer. 25. 15. v. 26.

4. It is to be understood of Persons under *equal circumstances*, when we compare the condition of People with each other: not the Nobles of one Nation with the Peasants of another, nor the Princes with the People; but every rank and order of men with those of the same rank and condition.

And upon these terms, we need no other proof of the truth of this assertion, than the instance in the Text of the People of Israel; which will best appear by comparing the state of both Kingdoms after the Body of the People was broken into the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The Kingdom of Israel by Jereboam's Policy, and for Reason of State, fell off from the Worship of the true God, and worshipped the Calves of Dan and Bethel. But did they prosper or succeed more than the Kingdom of Judah? The ten Tribes had a much larger territory, yet the Kingdom of Judah was stronger and flourished more, and continued longer by 135 years, than the Kingdom of Israel did; and when they were carried into Captivity, the ten Tribes were lost, as to their name and

and interest among the *People of Assyria*; but the *two Tribes* were restored after 70 years Captivity under the *Princes of the Line of David*. If we compare the *Kings of Israel and Judah* together; the *Posterity of David* was kept up among the *Kings of Judah*; but there were nine Families in the *Kingdom of Israel*; and but one of them lasted to the fourth Generation, and that was of *Jebu*, who did something towards the *Reformation of Religion*. Of the eighteen *Kings of Israel*, but eight escaped dying by the Sword: and it is easie to judge how miserable the *state* of that *People* must be, under so many violent changes of Government. Among the *Kings of Judah* those who were firmest to the true Religion prospered most, and the *Nation* under them enjoyed the greatest peace, or received the greatest deliverances, as in the days of *Asa*, *Jehosaphat* and *Hezekiah*. If we compare the times of the same *Kings* together, we shall find that while they adhered firmly to *God and Religion*, the *Nation* prospered exceedingly, as for a long time under the *Reigns of Solomon and Asa*; but when in their old Age they began to warp in their Religion and to decline in their Piety, nothing but trouble and confusion followed. So true did they find the saying of *Hanani* to *Asa*, *the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him*. But because he said, *he had done foolishly in not relying on the Lord, but on the King of Syria, therefore, saith he, from henceforth thou shalt have wars*. And from that time his Government was uneasie both to himself and his People; when he had imprisoned the Prophet for reproving him.

III. That there are some *circumstances* in the *sins* of a *Nation*, which do very much portend and hasten its Ruin. As,

1. When they are committed after more than ordinary mercies received; such as in reason ought to keep men most from the commission of them; as greater knowledge of the *Will of God* that other *People* enjoy; more frequent warnings of their danger than others have had; many and great deliverances which *God* hath vouchsafed; when none of these things, nor all of them together do move a *People* to repent, they shew an obstinate and incorrigible temper, and therefore *God* may sooner proceed to punish them. *God* did not forbear to punish other *Nations* for their transgressions, but he began with his own *People*. *For lo I begin to bring evil on the City which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? The destroying Angels in Ezekiel, were to begin at the Sanctuary.* Judgment, saith *St. Peter*, *must begin at the House of God*. He draws the line of his Justice parallel to that of his Mercy; and when every Mercy is put to the account, and heightens the guilt, the sum will soon rise so high to call for execution. The Prophet *Amos* tells *Damascus*, and *Gaza*, and *Tyre*, and *Edom*, and *Ammon*, and *Moab*, that none of them shall escape being punished for their transgressions; they need not doubt, the Rod would come time enough upon them; but yet *God* would begin with his own Children: *You only have I known of all the Families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities*. Where *God* hath given wonderful marks of his kindness, and many deliverances time after time, and yet they continue to *do wickedly*, there is the greater reason to expect sharper and severer punishments.

2. When they are committed with more than ordinary contempt of *God and Religion*. All Ages are bad enough; and every Age is apt to complain

complain of it self, as the worst of any; because it knows more ill of it self than of the foregoing. But yet there is a difference in the manner of sinning; sometimes the stream of wickedness hides its head, and runs under ground, and makes little noise, although it holds on the same course; at other times it seems to break forth like a mighty torrent as though it would bear down all before it, as though the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and Hell were let loose, and the Prisoners there had shaken off their chains and come up upon the earth; When Atheism, Profaneness and all manner of Wickedness grow impudent and bare-faced; when men do not only neglect Religion, but reproach and contemn it. *Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, shall not my soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?* God did forbear his People of <sup>Jer. 5. 9.</sup> Judah beyond what they could have expected, waiting for their amendment; but when they added impudence to their obstinacy, when they made sport with the Prophets, and turned their threatenings into songs of mirth and drollery, then the peremptory decree came forth, and there was no hopes to escape. *But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his Words, and misused his Prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his People, till there was no remedy.* There still seemed to be some hopes left till they came to this temper. But when they <sup>2 Chr. 36. 16.</sup> burlesqued the Prophet *Jeremiah's words*, and turned the expressions he used <sup>Jer. 23. 34, 36.</sup> into *Ridicule*, crying in contempt, *The burden of the Lord*, which is <sup>Ezek. 33. 31.</sup> called, *perverting the words of the living God*: when they turned *Ezekiel's words* into *pleasant songs*, and made sport with *God's judgments*, <sup>In canticum oris sui versunt eos. Vul. Lat.</sup> no wonder he was so highly provoked. For there can be no worse symptom to a people, than to laugh at the only means to cure them; and if this once grow common, it must needs make their condition desperate. For then it comes to God's turn to mock and laugh too; *Because I have called and ye have refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my Counsel, and would have none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.* <sup>Prov. 1. 24. v 25. v. 26.</sup> Woe be unto that people whom the Almighty takes pleasure in punishing.

3. When there is an universal degeneracy of all ranks and conditions of men. I do not mean such as is common to humane nature, but from the particular vertues of their Ancestors, or a common practice of those vices which do most frequently draw down the judgments of God, and make him to have a *controversie with a Land*. *By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing Adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood, therefore shall the Land mourn.* It was a strange degree of corruption the People of Jerusalem were fallen to before God led them into Captivity; when the Prophet *Jeremiah* used those expressions to them, *Run ye to and fro in the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it.* Could there ever be a fairer or kinder offer than this? But as *Isaiab* expresseth it, *the whole head was sick, and the heart faint, from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.* It seems a very strange passage in the Law of Leprosie, that if the Leprosie covered all the flesh, the person was <sup>Lev 13. 12. 13, 14</sup> to be pronounced clean; but if any raw flesh appeared; he was unclean: which it is very hard to understand, unless it were that the power of infection was then gone. Such a state the People of Jerusalem seemed

to have been in, there was no room for infection left, the plague of Leprosie had so over-run them, that there was no sound part left in the whole body.

Thus I have considered the influence which *doing wickedly* hath upon the *ruin* of a *Nation*, it remains now that I make Application of this to our own case.

We have been a People that have received wonderfull Mercies and many signal Deliverances from God's hand. He hath placed us in a rich and fruitfull Land; and hath furnished us with so great plenty, that even that hath been thought our burden; hath blessed us with such an increase of Trade that our Merchants far exceed those of *Tyre* both in Riches and Number. Our Ships of Trade are like a Valley of Cedars when they lie at home; and when they are abroad, they compass the earth, and make the riches of the *East* and *West Indies* to meet in our Streets. And since like the *Prince of Tyre*, *our seat is in the midst of the Seas*, God hath therefore secured us from such sudden inroads and invasions of foreign Enemies as many of our Neighbour Countries do groan under at this day: where the miseries of War are felt before they are seen; and those who thought themselves at ease and quiet, may be surpris'd in their Beds, and before they are aware of it may themselves, and Families, and Goods, and Houses, and Country be all burnt and consumed together. But God hath compassed us about with a deep Sea and a large Channel, and given us such a powerful Navy as may be both a defence at home and a terror abroad.

As to our Civil Constitution, if we consider the admirable Temper of our Government, the Justice and Wisdom of our Laws, and the greatness of our Liberties, we have no reason to envy the condition of any people upon earth. And after all our intestine broils and confusions which our sins had brought upon us, God was pleased in a most surprising manner, without War or Bloodshed, to our great satisfaction and the amazement of the World, to restore our Sovereign to his Throne, our Church and People to their just Rights and Liberties. And while our Neighbour Nations have lamentably suffer'd under all the dismal effects of a lasting War, he hath enlarged our Trade, continued our Peace, and thereby increased our Prosperity, after we had smarted under a dreadful Fire, and a raging Pestilence. Thus far all things tend still to make us a happy Nation, if we did know and value our own happiness.

But that which above all other things should make us so, hath been the great occasion of our Trouble, and is still of our Fears, and that is *Religion*. And yet in this respect we have advantages above any other *Nation* in the *Christian World*, having a *Church* reformed with so much *Wisdom* and *Moderation*, as to avoid the dangerous extreams on both sides. But even this hath enraged our *Adversaries* of the *Roman Church*, and made them the more restless to destroy it; and to stick at no means which they thought might tend to its ruin. *O blessed Jesus!* that ever thy Holy Name should be assumed by *Traitors* and *Murderers*; or that the promoting thy true *Religion* should be made the *colour* for the most wicked practices!

Not that the pure and peaceable *Religion* of *Jesus Christ* doth sower and imbitter the Spirits of Men towards each other, or dispose them to malice, hatred, revenge and cruelty (some of the worst passions of humane nature)

nature) or to the accomplishing their own ends by secret conspiracies and open violence, by treachery and falshood, by *Murders* and *Assassinations*; either on the *Ministers of Justice*, or on the most merciful and best natured of *Kings*. But be astonished O ye *Heavens*, and tremble O *earth*, that hast brought forth such a *Generation of Vipers* who are continually making their way through the *Bowels* of their *Mother*, and as we have reason to believe, have designed to destroy the *Father* of their *Country*. If these be the kind embraces of one that pretends to be the *Mother-Church*, if this be the paternal affection of the *Holy Father* at *Rome*, if this indeed be *zeal* for the *Catholick Cause*, if this be the way to reconcile us to their *Communion*, have we not great reason to be fond of returning into the *Bosom* of such a *Church* which may strangle us as soon as it gets us within her *Arms*? But there are some whose concernment it is, to make men believe there was no such dangerous *Plot* intended; I meddle not with that evidence which lies before you, but there is one notorious circumstance obvious to all persons, and sufficient to convince any, which is the horrid *Murder* actually committed on one of his *Majesty's Justices of Peace*, in cold blood, with great contrivance and deliberation. Do men imbrue their hands in blood for nothing? Why no other Person, why at such a time, why in such a manner? There was a reason for all this; he had taken the *Examination*; he knew too much to be suffered to live, and they hoped by his death to stifle his evidence, and to affrighten others from searching too far; and they managed that matter so, as though they had a mind to convince the *World*, they had no other end in taking away his life, but to prevent a further *Discovery*. And they whom his *Death* doth not convince, neither would they be convinced, *though he should rise again from the Dead*.

God forbid that we should charge such barbarous cruelties, such wicked conspiracies, such horrid designs on all who live in the *Communion* of that *Church*; but we must distinguish between the *seduced party* who are not thought fit to be trusted with such things, for fear their *Consciences* check at them, and their good nature disclose them; and the busy *Active Faction*, who are always restless and designing, and act by such *Maxims of Morality* as the more sober and modest *Heathens* would abhor. What hath this *Party* of men been doing among us this last hundred of years and more, but plotting conspiracies, inflaming our differences, betraying our liberties, heightning our discontents, and in short, undermining the *Foundations* both of our *Government* and *Religion*? And shall such men always triumph that they are too hard for our *Laws*? and that like the *Canaanites* and *Jebusites* to the *Children* Joel. 23. 29. of *Israel*, they will still be as *scourges* in our *sides*, and *thorns* in our *eyes*? If these things must be, I hope God designs it not to destroy us at last by them, but I am sure it doth *prove and try us*, whether we will hearken to the *Commandments of the Lord*, or to the vain *Traditions of Men*.

God knows, I speak not these things out of any malice or ill-will to the persons of any, for that I may use *St. Paul's* words, *My heart's desire and prayer to God for them all is, that they might be saved*. And although I cannot bear them witness, yet my hopes are, some even of these may think they have a *zeal for God in all this*; but we are sure it is not according to *knowledge*. Such a blind zeal as the *Jews* had, who when they killed the *Apostles*, thought they did *God good service*. But it is so furious, so inhumane, so unchristian a zeal, that it is charity to them,

as well as necessary care of our own safety, to keep them from a capacity of doing themselves and others mischief.

But before I conclude, the *Text* suggests to us three things, very pertinent to the *duty* of this *Day*; which I shall briefly recommend to your consideration.

1. Matter of *humiliation* for our *sins*, as they have an *influence* upon the *Nation's suffering*.

2. Matter of *Advice*, *Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth, and with all your heart*.

3. Matter of *encouragement*, *For consider, what great things he hath done for you*.

1. Matter of *Humiliation* for our *sins*. Which have been many and great, and aggravated by all the *Mercies* and *Deliverances* which God hath vouchsafed to us: and therefore he may be justly provoked to punish us proportionably to the measures of our ingratitude and disobedience. Let us lay our hands upon our hearts this day, and seriously consider *what requital we have made to the Lord for all the benefits he hath bestowed upon us?* For the Light of his Truth, the Purity of his Worship, the Power of his Grace, the frequency of his Sacraments, the Influences of his Spirit, and the continuance hitherto of our established Religion, in spite of all opposition whatsoever. But have we not been guilty of too much slighting that Truth, neglecting that Worship, resisting that Grace, contemning those Sacraments, quenching that Spirit; and of too great coldness and indifferency about matters of Religion? I do not fear that ever the *Church of Rome* should prevail among us by strength of Reason, or force of Argument, with all its specious colours and pretences, unless it be among those who understand neither one, nor the other Religion; but if men be loose in their Principles, and unconcerned about Religion in general, there will not be courage and constancy enough to keep it out. I do much more fear *Popery* coming in at the back door of *Atheism* and *Prophaneness*; than under all its false and deceitful pretences of *Universality* and *Infallibility*. And this those have been aware of, who have been so industriously sowing among us the seeds of *Irreligion*; knowing that if men be unconcerned as to all Religion, they will never have the courage to oppose any; but will be sure to close with the prevailing side. Next to this, I know no greater advantage that they take against us, than from the unnatural heats and unchristian divisions which have been among us. If men were *wise* they would consider, *at least in this our day, the things which do belong to our Peace*. How can men answer it at the great day, if in such a critical time as this is, they stand upon little niceties and punctilio's of Honour rather than Conscience, or upon keeping up the interests of their several Parties, and do not those things which themselves think they lawfully may do towards an *Union* with us? I pray God, the continuance of these breaches may not look like an argument of divine Infatuation upon us. But what can we say to that looseness and debauchery of manners, to that riot and luxury, to that wantonness and prophaneness, to that fashion of customary swearing, and *Atheistick Drollery*, which have been so much and so justly complained of among us? I hope there are many thousands at this day in *England*, whose souls *abhor the abominations that are committed, and who mourn in secret for them*, and therefore our case may not be so desperate as that of *Jerusalem* was. May we all this day so heartily repent of all these follies and impieties, that the Cause of our Fears which our sins give us being removed, we may hearken. (2.) To



(2.) To the matter of Advice here given, *Only to fear the Lord, and to serve him in Truth, and with all our heart.*

As though Samuel had said, Your hearts stand trembling still at the fear of God's judgments; when he doth but *lift up his voice in the Thunder*, and shew his Power in the Rain; I will tell you, how your hearts may *be at ease and quiet from the fear of evil*; be faithfull to God, maintain and practise the true Religion, sincerely, diligently, constantly, universally, and never doubt his protection of you; let your enemies be never so many, or your dangers never so great. Nothing exposes men more to the Wrath and Vengeance of God, nor provokes him more to leave a People to their own counsels, than false heartedness in Religion and Hypocrisie do. For the Hypocrite thinks to put a trick upon God Almighty; and while it seems to carry it fair towards him, he is dealing underhand for his own security another way: And God is then concerned in honour to let the world see *he will not be mocked*; for he knows how *to take the crafty in their own devices*; and very often brings to nought the most politick fetches of self-designing men. For when men seek themselves, and not the honour of God or Religion, but are ready to betray what ought to be dearer than their lives, for some mean and private interests of their own, they are oft-times so far from compassing their ends, that they become the Scorn and Reproach of men. But if men preserve their integrity, and *hold fast to the thing that is right*; they preserve their honour, even among their enemies, and either escape troubles, or have the comfort of a good Conscience under them, and however things happen to them for a while, *they are sure to have peace at the last.*

3. Lastly, Here is matter of *incouragement*. For consider what great things he hath done for you. When Jacob was sent into Egypt, and your Fathers cried unto the Lord, then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron which brought our Fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place. When their sins had brought them into great distresses afterwards, and they cried unto the Lord and confessed their sins, then the Lord raised up Jerubbaal and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you dwelled safe. Now consider, the same God who did those things, can do as great for you still; for his Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness are the same, and therefore you have the greatest reason to put your trust in him at all times, since *Psal. 9. 101* he never forsakes them that seek him.

Blessed be God that we have this day a farther argument for us to fear and serve him in truth, and with all our heart, by considering what great things he hath done for us. Many deliverances hath he wrought for us time after time, for which we ought still to be thankfull, since we yet enjoy the benefit of them. But the memory of former deliverances was almost worn out with many, and some began to question whether such holy and innocent men as the Fathers of the Society could be guilty of such horrid conspiracies; some were so perswaded of their Loyalty, that the Vipers seemed to have changed their natures, and to have lost their teeth, and to be a very soft and innocent kind of Creatures. Insomuch, that they were hardly brought to believe there could be a plot among them, especially of so horrid a nature as this appears more and more to have been, when such a viperous brood were suffered not only to lie quiet in the Shade, but to sport themselves in the Sun, and to enjoy the freedom of their own retreats. But God doth bring to light the hidden

things of darkness by such ways as shew his Providence, more than our prudence and foresight, that while we have the comfort, he alone may have the glory of our deliverance. But yet methinks we stand as it were upon the brink of a mighty precipice, which is so full of horror, that we tremble to look down from it; we are at present held up by a strong hand, but as by one single thread, and can we then think our selves secure from so great a danger?

*Blessed be God* for that Unanimity, that Zeal, that Courage, that Constancy you have hitherto shewed in the maintenance of our *Church* and *Religion*; but there is so much yet to be done for a firm *Establishment* of it to all *Generations* (which now by his *Majesty's Gracious* favour is put into your hands) as calls for all our Prayers, and your particular Care, lest if this opportunity be let slip, you never have such another.

This seems to be an *Honour* reserved for this *Parliament*, as the *Crown* and *Glory* of all your endeavours for the *Publick Good*. Go on then, to raise up this *Monument* to your *Eternal Fame*. This will not only make you be loved and esteemed by the present Age, but this will endear your *Memories* to *Posterity*, and make *Ages to come rise up* and call this a *Happy Session*.

But lest our sins should yet hinder us from so great a *Blessing*, We have great reason to humble our selves before God this day, to bewail those sins which may yet provoke him to punish us, and by Fasting and Prayer to implore his Mercy; that he would go on to preserve his Majesty's Person from all violent attempts, our Church and Religion from all the designs of its enemies, and deliver us all from *Unreasonable and Wicked Men*.

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# SERMON XVII.

Preached before the

# K I N G

A T

# WHITE-HALL,

March 7. 167<sup>8</sup><sub>9</sub>.

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MATTH. X. 16.

*Be ye therefore wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves.*

**I**N the beginning of this Chapter we read of one of the greatest and most improbable designs that ever was, *viz.* *Christ's* sending out his twelve *Apostles* to convert and to reform the World. For although the occasion of their first *Mission*, was to prepare the Jewish Nation for entertaining the Doctrine of the *Messias*, and therefore they are commanded *to go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel*; and as they went to preach; saying, *the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*; yet our Saviour in his following discourse mentions several things which cannot be applied to their first going abroad; particularly, that which relates to their hard usage and bad entertainment from the world; which we do not find they met with from the Jews upon this general message, but rather the contrary: for which cause he bids them *to provide nothing for themselves*, foreseeing that in all places there would be some that v. 6. v. 7. would be ready to receive them kindly; and when the *Seventy Disciples* were sent upon a like errand, *they returned with joy*, which such v. 9, 10, 11. Luk. 10. 17. young beginners would hardly have done, if they had met with such sharp persecutions then, which *Christ* here foretells his *Apostles* should suffer for preaching the Gospel. Either therefore we must say that *St. Matthew* puts things together by way of common Place, as he seems to do the *Miracles* and *Parables* of our Saviour, without pursuing the Order of time, as *St. Luke* doth, and so upon occasion of *Christ's* sending out his *Apostles* sets down all that relates to their *Mission*, although delivered at several times; or else that *Christ* himself did now at first acquaint them with all the difficulties that should attend their employment

ment in preaching the *Gospel* to the world, and consequently thought it necessary to give them at once their full instructions for their discharge of so great a trust, and due behaviour under so hard a service. A trust indeed so great, a service so hard as to require the *Wisdom* of an *Angel*, and the *Innocency* of *Adam* in *Paradise*; so many were the difficulties, so powerfull were the prejudices, so dangerous were the snares and temptations, which in all places did hinder the success of so great a Work. We are apt to admire and applaud the mighty Conquests which men do make over some small parts of the World, by the subtilty of their Wit, or by the force of their Arms, or by the vastness of their Treasure; but in all these cases, there is nothing wonderfull; for the causes being supposed, there is at least a great probability the event should follow: But for twelve inconsiderable persons, as to all outward circumstances, without craft, without arms, without money, to undertake the conquest of the world, by changing not only mens opinions as to Religion, but which is far more uneasy, the hearts and lives of men; seems at first appearance so unlikely a thing, that though none but very wise men could hope to manage it, yet none who were thought so would ever undertake it. Yet no less than this was the work which *Christ* sent abroad his *twelve Apostles* upon; and he tells them, very little to their comfort, what hardship they were like to meet with, *to be betrayed by friends, persecuted by enemies, and hated of all men for his names sake*: yea so great would the rage and malice and cruelty of men be against them, that he saith in the beginning of this verse, *Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of Wolves*. What! to be destroyed and devoured by them? No, but to turn those very *Wolves* into *Sheep*. But what powerfull charms must they use to secure themselves from present danger, and to work such mighty change? no other than those which our Saviour recommends in the words of the Text, *Be ye therefore wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves*. Not as though we were to search all the properties of *Serpents* and *Doves* to understand the meaning of these words, and to determine the truth or falshood of all the relations that are made concerning both of them; but as *Solomon* chose the *Ant* for an example of *diligence*, so our Saviour designing to joyn *Wisdom* and *Innocency* together proposes the *Serpent* for one and the *Dove* for the other; to let his *Disciples* understand that he allows them so much *Wisdom* as is consistent with *Innocency*, and perswades them to no more *Simplicity* than is consistent with *Wisdom*. For *Wisdom* without *Innocency* turns into craft and cunning; and *Simplicity* without *Wisdom* is meer folly.

But the great difficulty lies in the joyning these two together. For as the world goes and is like to do, men will be apt to say, How can those be *as wise as Serpents*, who must be *as harmless as Doves*? If all the world were agreed in the practice of innocency, and men did not fare the worse for it, it might pass for *Wisdom*; but when they have to deal with others who will use all the *Wisdom* of the *Serpent*, and are so far from being *harmless as Doves*, that they will take all the advantages that mens innocency and simplicity gives them, it seems hard to reconcile these two together. To what purpose, may some say, are mens eyes bid to be open, when their hands are tied up? Had they not better be without the *Serpent's* sagacity and quickness of sight, than espy their dangers, and not use the most likely means to prevent them? What doth the *simplicity* of the *Dove* signifie, but to make them a more

ease quarry for the birds of prey? Simplicity, and innocency, and patience, which our Saviour recommends under the phrase of being *harmless as Doves*, are good lessons for another world, but what do they signify in this, which is made up of nothing but artifice and fraud, and wherein the great art and business of life seems to be over-reaching and deceiving one another? Those only seem to have the true subtilty of the *Serpent* who can turn and wind themselves every way as makes most for their advantage; who by their soft and ease motions, by their artificial glidings and insinuations get an interest great enough to mischief while they watch for an opportunity to do it. *As the Serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty*, i. e. say the *Fathers* by the familiarity and easiness of access which he had, playing, as some fancy, about the Neck and Arms of *Eve* in the state of Innocency. Those have the true subtilty of the *Serpent* who creep into houses and understand the secrets of persons and families; and so know how to address, and how to keep in awe: who seem as *harmless as Doves* till they have a fair opportunity of instilling their poison, and do the greater mischief by being thought so innocent. Who have the dangerous teeth and the double tongue, who can deny the Truth without lying, and forswear themselves without perjury; who would sanctifie the greatest villanies by their good intentions; and when they are *ravenous as Wolves*, and as *cruel as Vultures*, would yet be thought as *harmless as Doves*, or as innocent as a *Child new born*.

2Cor. 11. 3,  
Ramirez  
de Prado  
Pentecost.  
c. 1.

What now can simplicity and innocency, and meekness, and patience signifie against all this serpentine subtilty? And if you take away from the *Serpent* his artificial motion and his poison, you leave him weak and contemptible, ready to be trampled on by every passenger, having nothing to defend himself but his skin and eye-sight. And if you do allow his most natural properties, the innocency of the *Dove* is a very unequal match for him if they be opposed, and seem of so different natures that they can hardly be joyned together in the same subject.

And yet notwithstanding all these objections, it was certainly the design of our *Saviour* in these words.

1. To recommend the *conjunction* and *union* of these two to his disciples, *being wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves*.

2. To do it chiefly upon this consideration, that this would be the best means to promote his Religion against all the arts and designs of men, as well as the best security for themselves.

And therefore in the prosecuting this subject, I shall endeavour these two things.

1. To shew wherein the *conjunction* of these two doth consist.

2. That this is the best means to promote the *Christian Religion* against all the mischievous arts and devices of men.

1. Wherein the *conjunction* of these two doth consist. It is no hard matter to tell men how they may be *wise as Serpents*, &c. By foresight and caution, so as to discern and prevent unnecessary dangers; not to run themselves foolishly and vainly upon needless troubles, nor to draw persecutions upon themselves, when they can decently and lawfully avoid them; not to give advantages to their enemies by their weakness and indiscretion, nor a just occasion of offence to any; but in all lawful things to endeavour to gain upon them, and by all acts of kindness and charity to recommend our Religion to them. Neither is it hard to tell wherein we must appear to be *harmless as Doves*, viz. by simplicity and integrity of mind, by meekness and patience, by forgiving injuries,

and

and bearing persecutions as becomes *Christians*, by a holy, innocent, and unblameable conversation: but the difficulty still lies in the *conjunction* and *mixture* of both these; which as *St. Chrysoftom* observes, is the thing which *Christ* especially aims at, so as to make one vertue arise from both of them; as *Greg. Nazianzen* said of his Father, *That he neither suffered the Wisdom of the Serpent to degenerate into cunning, nor the innocency of the Dove into indiscretion, but made up one compleat kind of vertue from the mixture of both together*; and that I suppose lies in these things, (1.) *Integrity of Mind*, (2.) *Ingenuity*, or fairness of behaviour, (3.) *Meekness and Patience*: and in the due practice of these consists that *prudent Simplicity* which results from these two; *being wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves*. Which I shall make appear by shewing, that men cannot be *harmless as Doves* without them; and that they are so far from being inconsistent with being *wise as Serpents*, that a great part of *Wisdom* lies in them.

*Chrysoft. in loc.*  
*Greg. Nazianzen. orat. 19.*

I. *Integrity of Mind*; which is opposed to falseness and hypocrisie; and therefore *St. Paul* joyns *simplicity and godly sincerity* together. We read of some in *Scripture* who are said to have a *double heart*, as well as a *double tongue*: they are διδύχα, saith *St. James*, men with *two Souls*, one for *God*, and another for the *World*; or rather none at all for *God*, (since he must have all or none) but one to appearance and another in reality, having quite other thoughts, intentions and designs than they make the world believe. Some tell us that the *Serpent* hath no forked tongue, but through the quickness of its motion, and suddenness of its vibration it appears to be so; men have but one heart and mind, but they may use such artificial motions and sudden turnings, as to appear to have more. But this is contrary to that integrity and simplicity which *Christ* requires, and the *Scripture* every where so much extols, as to place mens *perfection and wisdom* in it. *Noah* was said to be a *just man and perfect in his Generations*, because he maintained his integrity in a very corrupt and degenerate Age. *Job* is said to be a *man perfect and upright, one that feareth God and escheweth evil*: and in another place of *Job*, the *perfect* and the *wicked* are opposed: *he destroyeth the perfect and the wicked*; i. e. the good and the bad. *Mark the perfect man and behold the upright*, saith the *Psalmist*. *The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way*, saith *Solomon*; *but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness*, and in the next words; *The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them, but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness*. And if *Solomon's* word may be taken, a man's integrity is his greatest wisdom; for *righteousness*, saith he, *keepeth him that is upright in the way*; *but wickedness overthroweth the sinner*. *He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely*; *but he that perverteth his ways shall be known*. And therefore he concludes that *a man of understanding will walk uprightly*.

*2 Cor. 1. 12.*  
*Psal. 12. 2.*  
*Jam. 4. 8.*

*Isid Orig. l. 12. c. 4.*

*Gen. 6. 9.*

*Job 1. 1.*

*9. 22.*

*Pf. 37. 37.*  
*Prov. 11. 5.*

*6.*

*13. 6.*

*10. 9.*

*15. 21.*

All this seems a strange Paradox, and to come from such as are not versed in business, nor acquainted with affairs of the world, or from those who are resolved to maintain their hypothesis, though against the common sense of mankind, as the *Stoicks* of old, who made their *Wise Man* beautiful though never so deformed, rich though ready to starve for poverty, and a *Prince* though sold for a slave; just thus doth it seem to some men to talk of the consistency of *Wisdom and Simplicity* together, or to suppose those take the most prudent care of their

their own interest, who are tied up to the strict rules of downright honesty, and are resolv'd with *Job* to hold fast their integrity.

But that there is nothing absurd or unreasonable in this supposition, nothing but what is true, and may be justified by the common sense and experience of mankind will appear by these considerations.

1. That is the truest Wisdom of a man which doth most conduce to the happiness of life. For Wisdom as it refers to action lies in the proposal of a right end, and the choice of the most proper means to attain it. Which end doth not refer to any one part of a man's life, but to the whole as taken together. He therefore only deserves the name of a Wise Man, not that considers how to be rich and great when he is poor and mean, nor how to be well when he is sick, nor how to escape a present danger, nor how to compass a particular design; but he that considers the whole course of his life together, and what is fit for him to make the end of it, and by what means he may best enjoy the happiness of it. I confess it is one great part of a Wise Man never to propose too much happiness to himself here; for whoever doth so, is sure to find himself deceiv'd, and consequently is so much more miserable as he fails in his greatest expectations. But since God did not make men on purpose to be miserable, since there is a great difference as to mens conditions, since that difference depends very much on their own choice, there is a great deal of reason to place true wisdom in the choice of those things which tend most to the comfort and happiness of life.

2. That which gives a man the greatest satisfaction in what he doth, and either prevents or lessens or makes him more easily bear the troubles of life, doth the most conduce to the happiness of it. It was a bold saying of *Epicurus*, That it is more desirable to be miserable by acting according to reason, than to be happy in going against it; and I cannot tell how it can well agree with his notion of felicity: but it is a certain truth, that in the consideration of happiness, the satisfaction of a man's own mind doth weigh down all the external accidents of life. For, suppose a man to have riches and honours as great as *Ahasuerus* bestowed on his highest favourite *Haman*; yet by his sad instance we find that a small discontent when the mind suffers it to encrease and to spread its venom, doth so weaken the power of reason, disorder the passions, make a man's life so uneasy to him, as to precipitate him from the height of his fortune into the depth of ruin. But on the other side, if we suppose a man to be always pleas'd with his condition, to enjoy an even and quiet mind in every state, being neither lifted up with prosperity, nor cast down with adversity, he is really happy in comparison with the other. It is a mere speculation to discourse of any compleat happiness in this World; but that which doth either lessen the number, or abate the weight, or take off the malignity of the troubles of life, doth contribute very much to that degree of happiness which may be expected here.

3. The integrity and simplicity of a man's mind doth all this. (1.) It gives the greatest satisfaction to a man's own mind. For although it be impossible for a man not to be liable to error and mistake, yet if he doth mistake with an innocent mind, he hath the comfort of his innocency when he thinks himself bound to correct his error. But if a man prevaricates with himself and acts against the sense of his own mind, tho' his conscience did not judge aright at that time, yet the goodness of

the bare act with respect to the rule, will not prevent the sting that follows the want of inward integrity in doing it. *The backslider in heart, saith Solomon, shall be filled with his own ways; but a good man shall be satisfied from himself.* The doing just and worthy and generous things without any sinister ends and designs, leaves a most agreeable pleasure to the mind, like that of a constant health which is better felt than expressed. When a man applies his mind to the knowledge of his duty, and when he doth understand it, (as it is not hard for an honest mind to do, for as the Oracle answered the Servant who desired to know how he might please his Master, *If you will seek it, you will be sure to find it,*) sets himself with a firm resolution to pursue it, *though the rain falls, and the floods arise, and the winds blow on every side of him;* yet he enjoys peace and quiet within, notwithstanding all the noise and blustering abroad; and is sure to hold out after all, because he is founded upon a rock. But take one that endeavours to blind, or corrupt or mangle his conscience, to make it serve some mean end or design; what uneasy reflections hath he upon himself, what perplexing thoughts, what tormenting fears, what suspicions and jealousies do disturb his imagination and rack his mind? what art and pains doth such a one take to be believed honest and sincere? and so much the more, because he doth not believe himself: He fears still he hath not given satisfaction enough, and by overdoing it, is the more suspected. It is a very unsatisfactory imployment that man hath who undertakes to persuade others of the truth of that which himself at the same time knows to be false; for he is not convinced by his own arguments, and therefore despises those that are, and is afraid of those that seem to be; either he thinks them fools for believing him, or that they only flatter and seem to believe when they do not; and then he thinks his arts are understood and his credit lost, and fears while he goes about to impose upon others, they may do the same by him. So that unless he could see into the hearts of men, (which would be no very comfortable sight to him) all his craft and subtilty must leave him under perplexity and continual fear. But suppose that through over officiousness he happens to take some false step, and so fall into the disfavour of those whom above all he desired to please; how miserable is that man's condition when he finds himself forsaken of God, despised by men, and without any peace or contentment within? (2.) Because integrity doth more become a man, and doth really promote his interest in the World. It is the saying of *Dio Chrysostom* an heathen Orator, *that Simplicity and Truth is a great and wise thing; but Cunning and Deceit is foolish and mean; For,* saith he, *observe the beasts, the more courage and spirit they have, the less art and subtilty they use; but the more timorous and ignoble they are, the more false and deceitfull.* True Wisdom and Greatness of Mind raises a man above the need of using little tricks and devices. Sincerity and honesty carries one through many difficulties which all the arts he can invent would never help him through. For nothing doth a man more real mischief in the world than to be suspected for too much craft; because every one stands upon his guard against him, and suspects plots and designs where there are none intended; insomuch that though he speaks with all the sincerity that is possible, yet nothing he saith can be believed. And is this any part of true wisdom to lose reputation, upon which mens power and interest so much depends? From hence the most artificial men have found it necessary to put on a guise of simplicity

*Clem. Alex.  
Str. 4.*

*Dio Chryf.  
de regn. Or.  
1. p. 6.*



plicity and plainness, and make greatest protestations of their honesty when they most lie in wait to deceive. If then the reputation of integrity be so necessary, the main point to be considered as to wisdom is this, whether such reputation can be sooner gained and longer held by meer pretending to simplicity, or by the practice of it? He that only pretends to it, must act otherwise than he designs, and yet is concerned to make others believe he doth not: but in this he puts a force and constraint upon himself which is uneasie to any man, and he lets the vizard fall off sometimes when it is more observed than he thinks, and then his countenance is taken at the greatest disadvantage, and this is given out for the only true Copy. And while he keeps it on, it is a hard matter to deceive all eyes; for it may be some by-standers have practised the same arts themselves, and they know the make and the fashion, and all the several strings which help to keep it from falling off; and when the suspicion grows strong, the laying aside the disguise will not be able to give satisfaction. But *he that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart,* as the *Psalmist* describeth the practice of integrity, may possibly meet with such as will be ready to condemn him for hypocrisie at first; but when they find he keeps to a certain rule, and pursues honest designs, without any great regard to the opinion which others entertain concerning him; then all that know him cannot but esteem and value him; his friends love him, and his enemies stand in awe of him. *The path of the just,* saith the *Wise man,* *is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* As the day begins with obscurity and a great mixture of darkness, till by quick and silent motions the light overcomes the mists and vapours of the night, and not only spreads its beams upon the tops of the Mountains, but darts them into the deepest and most shady Valleys: thus simplicity and integrity may at first appearing look dark and suspicious, till by degrees it breaks through the clouds of envy and detraction, and then shines with a greater glory. Thus the Christian Simplicity was despised and reproached as folly and obstinacy, and many hard censures and sharp persecutions, did men undergo for the sake of it for a long time, (as the most durable Kingdoms have had the sharpest pangs and been the longest in the birth:) but at last persecuted and despised innocency prevailed over all the craft and power of the World. It was then the great glory of Christians that their enemies could reproach them for nothing but their Religion; that they were in all other things honest and good men, only they were Christians: and then true Religion is most likely to prevail in the World, when mens other vertues commend their Religion, and not when zeal for their Religion is their only vertue. When righteousness, and peace, and humility, and charity, and temperance, and patience, and a constant integrity make men enquire after a Religion which produces such fruits as these are, then it will appear that Apostles and Preachers of Religion are then *wise as Serpents* as to the promoting the honour of their Doctrine, when by the innocency and simplicity of their lives they are *harmless as Doves*.

(3.) But suppose that troubles and persecutions do arise, what becomes of the *harmless Doves* then? they are soon taken and easily destroyed, when those who are only *wise as Serpents* may see many ways to escape danger, which the innocent Doves dare not follow them in; what wisdom then can there be in so much simplicity as makes suffering unavoidable?

This is the hardest part of the case, but that which our Saviour doth here suppose, when he saith, *Behold I send you forth as Sheep in the midst of Wolves; be ye therefore wise as Serpents, &c.* So that, if we cannot make out this to hold in respect of sufferings, we must yield this counsel or advice of Christ to his Disciples to be defective as to the main occasion of it. To this therefore I answer in these particulars;

1. Our Saviour doth allow the *wisdom of prevention* as to all unnecessary dangers; for otherwise he would never have bid his Disciples be *wise as Serpents*, but only be *as quiet as Sheep and as harmless as Doves*. God forbid that Christian simplicity should be taken in so ill a sense as to hinder us from a just and necessary care of our own safety: and not only for the preservation of our selves but of our Religion too. When we have liberty and opportunity to do it, it is being stupid as Sheep, and careless as the Ravens of their young ones, and not being only *harmless as Doves*, to neglect the doing it. In such a case it is a violation of the duty we owe to God and to Posterity, if we do not use all lawful endeavours for the preservation of our selves and our Religion from all the attempts of wicked and unreasonable men. But in case storms do arise after all our care, Christ doth not seem to forbid Disciples making use of a present shelter till the storm be blown over;

Ma. 10. 23. *But when they persecute you in this City flee to another.* And some say, the likeness to Doves is recommended in regard that its safety lies chiefly in the quickness of its flight. But our Saviour neither imposes a necessity of suffering in all cases, nor allows a liberty of flying upon every apprehension of danger, but leaves this matter to be determined according to circumstances, as makes most for God's honour, and his Church's good: *i. e.* herein to be *wise as Serpents and harmless as Doves*; by not exposing themselves to needless dangers when they may be avoided with a good Conscience, nor declining any necessary duty for the sake of any trouble which may follow upon it. There were some in the *Primitive Church* who thought it unlawfull in any case to avoid persecution, and

Tertul. de fug. c. 1. § 6.

*Tertullian* pleads their cause with many plausible reasons; saying, *That persecution is designed on purpose for tryal by God himself; that the allowance for flying was peculiar to the Apostles case, not to avoid persecution, but for the more speedy propagation of the Gospel*; and some of the Christians were so far from flying that they ran upon persecution, and

Chryf. hom. 40. in Juu. & Max.

seemed ambitious of Martyrdom. *St. Chrysostom* saith, *It was one of the reasons Julian gave why he would not openly persecute Christianity; because he knew the Christians gloried in being Martyrs*; and he would not humour them so much as to spread his Nets to catch such *silly Doves*, that never minded the danger they fell into. But the *Christian Church* never approved rash and indiscreet suffering, as much as it encouraged all Christians to patience and courage and perseverance; for they required

Clem. Alex. Str. 4. p. 481.

not only a *just cause*, but a *necessary occasion* of suffering, and blamed those who hastned their own destruction; for they observe that *Christ himself* made use of prudent caution when he knew the Jews had designed to put him to death; for it is said, *from thence forward he walked no more publickly among the Jews*. When the storms seemed to threaten the

Orig. in Jo. Tom. 31.

leaders of the Church in such a manner that by their withdrawing the People might probably enjoy more quiet, and not want help enough to perform the necessary Offices, even the *Bishops* were allowed to re-

Cypr. ep. 14. Athan. de fuga.

tire; and upon this ground *St. Cyprian* and *Athanasius* justified them-

selves:

elves : but when the case is common, when the necessities of the Church require the presence of their Pastors, *then the good Shepherd must lay down his life for the Sheep*, as St. *Augustin* hath resolved this case in his *Epistle to Honoratus*. So that this whole matter belongs to *Christian* <sup>Aug. ep. 180.</sup> *prudence*, which is then most needfull and fit to be used, when the resolution of the case depends upon particular circumstances; so as not to shun any necessary duty for fear of danger, nor to run upon any unnecessary trouble to shew our courage.

2. Since no wisdom is great enough to prevent all troubles of life, that is the greatest which makes them most easie to be endured. If the *Wisdom of the Serpent* could extend so far as to avoid all the calamities that mankind is subject to, it would have a mighty advantage over the *simplicity* of the *Dove*; but since the most subtle contrivers cannot escape the common accidents of life, but do frequently meet with more vexations and crosses than innocent and undesigning men do, we are then to consider, since the burden must be born, what will make it sit most easily upon our shoulders: And that which abates of the weight, or adds to our strength, or supports us with the best hopes, is the truest wisdom. *And who is he that will harm you*, saith St. *Peter*, *if ye be* <sup>1 Pet. 3.13.</sup> *followers of that which is good? i. e.* innocency is the best security against trouble which one can have in this World; but since the World is so bad as that the best may suffer in it, and for being such, yet that ought not to trouble or affright them; *But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.* <sup>14.</sup> But should it not trouble a man to suffer innocently? yes, with a respect to others, but as to himself he may more justly be troubled if he suffered justly. For nothing makes sufferings so heavy to be born as a *guilty Conscience*: that is a burden more insupportable to an awakened mind than any outward affliction whatsoever. *Judas* thought himself to be *wise as a Serpent*, not only in escaping the danger which he saw *Christ* and his *Disciples* falling into by the combination of the *Priests*, and *Scribes*, and *Pharisees* against them; but in ingratiating himself with them and making a good bargain for his own advantage: but the want of a *Dove-like innocency* marred his whole design; and filled his conscience with such horreur as to make him own his guilt, and put an end to his miserable life. Whereas the other *Apostles* whose chief care was to preserve their innocency as to any wilfull sins, though they had too much of the *fearfulness* as well as the *simplicity of Doves*, till the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them; yet they held out in the midst of fears and dangers, and came at last to *rejoyce in their sufferings*. And St. *Paul* tells us what the cause of it was, *For our rejoycing is this, the testimony of our Conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.* <sup>AB. 1.4. 2 Cor. 1.12.</sup> See here, not only what peace and serenity, but what rejoycing follows an innocent mind, and the testimony of a good conscience! when all the arts of fleshly Wisdom will be found vain and useles, affording no satisfaction to a man's mind, when he looks back upon all of them, then sincerity and integrity of heart will give a man the most comfortable reflections, and fill him with the most joyfull expectations. This enables a man to look back without horror, to look about him without shame, to look within without confusion, and to look forward without despondency. So that as the straight line is the shortest of any; so upon greatest consideration it will be found that

that the upright and sincere man takes the nearest way to his own happiness.

II. Prudent Simplicity implies the practice of *Ingenuity*; which is such a natural freedom in our words and actions, that men may thereby understand the sincerity of our mind and intention. Not that men are bound to declare all they know to every impertinent enquirer, which is *simplicity* without *prudence*; but in all cases wherein men ought to declare their minds, to do it without *fraud* and *dissimulation*; and in no case to design to over-reach and deceive others. This is that *simplicity* of *Conversation* which our Saviour requires when he saith, *let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay*, i. e. you ought to converse with so much sincerity, that your bare affirmation or denial may be sufficient, this being the proper use of speech that men may understand each others minds by their words: *for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil*, i. e. the wickedness of mankind and that distrust and suspicion which is occasioned by it, is the reason they are ever put to make use of Oaths to make their Testimony appear more credible. And therefore nothing but such necessity can justify the use of them; Oaths and Wars being never lawfull but when they are necessary. Some understand the reduplication of those words, *yea, yea, nay, nay*, after a more emphatical manner; viz. that our words must not only agree with the *truth* of the *thing*, but with the *conception* and *sense* of our *minds*; and so the greatest *candour* and *sincerity* is commanded by them. Truth was described of old, *sitting upon an Adamant, with Garments white as Snow, and a light in her hand*, to intimate that clearness and simplicity and firmness that doth accompany it; such as was most remarkable in the primitive *Christians*; who abhorred any thing that looked like dissimulation and hypocrisy, especially in what concerned their Religion. In this they were plain and open, hearty and sincere, neither exasperating their enemies by needless provocations, nor using any artificial ways of compliance for their own security. When the casting some few grains of incense on the altar, and pouring out wine before the Emperor's statue might have saved their lives, they chose rather to die than to defile their consciences with that impure and idolatrous Worship. To be dismissed after summons to the tribunal without compliance was a scandal, and raised suspicions of some secret assurances given; to be proclaimed to have sacrificed though they had not, and not to contradict it was great infamy; to procure a certificate of sacrificing though they did not; or to pay fees to the Officers to be excused from doing it, made them a sort of *libellati*, although their names were never entred in the Heathen Rolls, and they were forced to undergo severe penance before they were restored to the Communion of the Church. So much simplicity and singleness of heart was then supposed necessary to the Christian profession. No *directing the intention*, no *secret reservation*, no *absolution* either before committing the fact or immediately upon confession of it, were ever heard of or allowed in those days of Christian innocency and simplicity. If the Heathen Officers sought after *Christians*, they neither lyed to them, nor betrayed their Brethren; but would rather endure torments themselves, than expose others to them; for which reason St. *Augustin* highly commends the resolution of *Firminus* an *African Bishop*, who rather chose to be tortured himself than discover a Christian committed to his care who was sought after for no other

Mat. 5. 37.

Malder. de  
abusu restr.  
ment c. 12.  
Sect. 3. p.  
98.

Themist.  
orat. 3.

Euseb. 1. 8.  
c. 3.

Rigalt. ad  
Cypr. ep. 81.

Aug. de  
Mend. c. 13

other reason, but because he was a Christian; and the *Heathen Emperor* himself was so pleased with it, that for his sake he forgave the other person and suffered him to enjoy his liberty. When the Christians were summoned before the *Heathen Tribunals*, they used no *shifting tricks or evasions*, they concealed no part in their minds of what was necessary to make what they spake to be true; they did not first pre-emptorily deny what they knew to be true, and then back such a denial with horrid oaths and dreadfull imprecations upon themselves, and after all think to justify the doing so by vertue of some *secret reservation* in their own minds. Is this becoming the *simplicity and ingenuity of Christians*? Such may possibly think themselves *Wise as Serpents* in so doing; but I am sure they are far from being *innocent as Doves*. But are there any who go under the name of *Christians*, who own and defend such practices? I think indeed scarce any who went under the name of *honest Heathens* ever did it. For they did not only require constancy and fidelity in oaths and promises, but simplicity and sincerity both in the making and keeping of them. They condemned the *Romans* who thought to avoid their oath by a trick, and sent them back to the *Carthaginians*: they mightily applauded the constancy of *Regulus* in observing the words of his oath as to his return, although very capable of a mental reservation; and if he did not promise the *Carthaginians* to persuade the *Roman Senate* to the Peace, he behaved himself with great sincerity as well as constancy. When the King of *Persia* thought by a trick to avoid the oath he had made to one of his Neighbour Princes, viz. That he would not pass such a stone which was set up as a Boundary between them, and he took up the stone and caused it to be carried before his Army; his Counsellors told him they feared such deceit would never prosper with him, because as the Prince sent him word, Covenants are to be understood according to the plain meaning of the words, and not according to any secret reservation.

Cicer. de Offic. l. 1. c. 3.

Eclyp. b. Alex. To. 2. p. 119.

P. 123.

Since then the very Heathens disallowed such artifices and frauds, are there any worse than Heathens that justify and maintain them? Is not this rather an artifice and fraud of their Adversaries to render them odious? But even in this respect we ought to be *harmless as Doves*, and therein lies a necessary part of Christian Ingenuity, in not charging on others more than they are guilty of.

I shall therefore fairly represent the doctrine held in the *Church of Rome* about these matters, and leave you to judge how far it is consistent with *Christian Simplicity*.

There are some things wherein the *Divines* of the *Roman Church* are agreed, and some things wherein they differ.

The things wherein they are agreed are these.

I. That an *Officious lye* is but a *venial sin*. This they do not stick to declare to be the common opinion of all their *Divines*. *Ex communi omnium sententia*, saith *Azorius*, a lye that hurts no body, but is intended for the good of others is no mortal sin; and herein all are agreed, saith *Reginaldus*; because, say they, where there is no other fault but the mere falsity, it is not of its own nature and kind any mortal sin; for a lye of it self is a harmless thing, or at least, saith *Lessius*, the hurt is not great that it doth, and it is no great matter whether men be deceived or not, if they do not suffer much by it; and from hence he concludes it to be *venial in its own nature*. It is true, they say an *officious lye* may become a *mortal sin* by accident, when it is confirmed by an oath, when it is too publick and scandalous, and used by those

Azor. Inst. Moral. par. 3. l. 13. c. 1. dub. 2. Reginald. prax. l. 24. sect. 5. n. 13. Less. de just. c. 47. aub. 5. n. 40.

*Sayr Clav. Reg. l. 11. c. 3. n. 18.* those from whom the people expect Truth, as Bishops and Preachers and Religious men, saith Sayr. Not even in them, saith Navarr, unless the scandal be great, or their consciences tell them they are mortal sins; or some other circumstances make it so. If it be in matter of judicature, although the thing be small, yet I think a lye a mortal sin, saith Cajetan, because men are then bound to speak truth. That reason is of no force at all, say Soto and Navarr, for that circumstance alone doth not alter the nature of the sin. So that if a man tells never so many lyes, provided he intend to hurt no body by them, they do not make one mortal sin. For that is a fixed rule among the Casuists, that an infinite number of venial sins do not amount to one mortal; and consequently though they have obligation in them, yet they do not put a man out of the Favour of God. But upon these principles what security have men to invent and spread abroad lyes, provided they are intended for a good end in their own opinion? What sincerity is to be expected, when the confessing a truth may do them injury; and the telling a lye may do them good? for even Cajetan himself makes that only a pernicious lye, when a man designs to do mischief by it. They cry out upon it as a great scandal for any of us to say, they think it lawfull to lye for the Catholick Cause; and in truth they do not say so in words; for they still say, a lye is unlawfull for any end whatsoever; but here lies the subtilty of it; They grant it in general to be a fault, but such a venial, such an inconsiderable fault, if it be for a good end; and they have so many ways to expiate the guilt of venial sins; that the difference is very little as to the practice of it, from making it no sin at all. And some think they had better own downright lying, than make use of such absurd ways of evading it by mental reservations; by which men may be truly said to affirm that which they do deny, and to deny that which they do affirm. But notwithstanding this,

2. They are agreed, that in some cases, that which otherwise would be a lye, is none by the help of a mental reservation. Let us not therefore do the Jesuits so much injury to charge that upon them as their peculiar doctrine, which is common to all their Divines and Casuists. And herein F. Parsons was in the right, when he asserted, that the doctrine of Equivocation and mental reservation hath been received in the Roman Church for four hundred years: only some have extended the practice of it farther than others have done. But in the Case of Confession they all agree without exception, saith the same Author, that if a man hath confessed a thing to a Priest, he may deny and swear that he never confessed it, without being guilty either of a lye or perjury; reserving this in his mind, that he hath confessed it so as to utter it to another. And I find the greatest enemies to the use of

Mental reservation in other cases, do allow it in this; and do not barely allow it, but think a man bound in conscience to use it, under grievous sin, saith Parsons, when by no other means of silence, diversion, or evasion the said secrese can be concealed. I do not now meddle with the inviolableness of the Seal of Confession, which I do not deny a great regard ought to be had to (where an obligation greater than that of keeping a secret doth not take it off, as where the life of my Prince or the publick safety are concerned) not from any divine Institution, but from the baseness of betraying a Trust: but I wonder how they came to think it to be no lye or perjury in this Case, and yet to be so in any other? It is to no purpose to alledge other Reasons peculiar to this Case, for the single question is, whether what

*Genes. Sepulveda de rat. dicendi restim. c. 3. Barns c Equivo. Sect. 28. n. 4. p. 255. Hurtado resolut. moral. p. 449. Caramu. de restrict. mental. art. 13. p. 360. Steph. à Sancto Paulo Theol. Moral. tr. 5. dis. 5. dub. 7. sect. 3. n. 232.*

*Treatise tending to Mitigation, c. 7.*

*Sect. 2, 3. C 10. Sect 1.*

*Grot. de jure belli & pacis. l. 3. c. 1. n. 17.*

*Cajet. in 2. 2. 9. 110. art. 4.*

*3. 8. Bell. de omiff. grat.*

*peccat. 1. n. 3. 8. Bell. de omiff. grat.*

*Basile Theol. pract. v.*

*Soto de rat. regendi se. 2. qu. 6.*

*Navar. ubi supr.*

*Cajet. in 2. 2. qu. 69. art. 1.*

*Man. c. 18. n. 3.*

*Navarr. c. 3. n. 18.*

what a man keeps in his mind, can keep him from being guilty of a lye, or of perjury in his words? If it cannot, then not in the Case of Confession; if it may, then a mental reservation will equally do it in any other Case. And consequently no man who doth allow it in this case, can on that account disallow it in any other.

This Navarr very well saw, and therefore from the allowance of it Navarr. in this Case of Confession he deduces the lawfulness of the use of it in all cases wherein a man is not bound to speak all he knows. The common answer in this case, is, *That in confession the Priest doth not know as man but as God; and therefore when he is asked any thing as a man he may deny what he knows as God.* But Navarr at large shews the folly and absurdity of this Answer, because this doth not salve the contradiction, for to say he doth not know is as much as to say he doth not any way know it; which is false if he doth know it in any capacity: and it is false that he doth not know it as man, because he knows it as a Priest, and as such he is not God but Man. And the very Seal of Confession discovers that it is made known to him as a Man, and with the consent of the penitent a Priest may reveal what he heard in confession; and in other cases he may make use of that knowledge as a man, without particular discovery. I do not therefore wonder to see the stout and plain-hearted defenders of the lawfulness of this practice in other cases, to express so much astonishment at the nicety and scrupulosity of those, who dispute against it as so dangerous and pernicious a thing upon other occasions, when they think it so pious and innocent in this. For, say they, *If it be a lye to deny what a man knows, it is not in the power of the Church or of God himself for any end whatsoever to make it lawfull for a Priest to deny what he knows.* And if it be not a lye in that Case, neither is it in any other.

But although none in the Roman Church are able to answer that argument, yet I must do some of them that Justice, as to clear them from the owning the allowance of this practice in other common cases upon the same ground. Yet I fear upon strict enquiry we shall find that those do equivocate more who seem to deny it, than those who openly assert it. For although two persons of the Roman Church seem wholly to reject it, except in the case of Confession; yet the *a* one of them is charged with \* singularity and suspicion of Heresie, and the *b* other with little less than Heresie and † Apostasie; and their proceedings with him shew what esteem they had of him *c*. But most of their other Divines and Casuists do approve it in case of Testimony and Accusation. Soto doth allow a Witness being examined about a secret crime to say, *he doth not know any thing of it*, although he were privy to it: and for this he quotes some Divines of great Authority before him; as he might have done many others: but he will not allow him to say, *He did not see the fact committed, nor that he heard nothing of it, because, saith he, words of knowledge seem to be restrained by judicial proceedings to that*

*Quare omnes qui fatentur quod Confessarius vere dicere potest, Ille hoc non est mihi confessus, sub intelligendo ita ut teneat prodere coguntur professi confiteri quod etiam alius quilibet qui non tenetur aliquid dicere, vere poterit responderè illud sibi non esse dictum, subintelligendo non esse ita ei dictum, ut teneatur id prodere. Cum igitur omnes confiteantur illud, nemo debet hoc negare. Nav. ib. n. 8.*

*Si enim est mendacium inficiari quod noveris, non est Ecclesia, imò neque in ipsius Dei potestate, quocunque tandem ex fine efficere, ut Sacerdos licitè inficiatur quod noverit. Emoner. Splendor verit. Moral. c. Barnes. c. 16. n. 3.*

*a Genes. Sepulveda de rat. disendi Testimon.*

*\* Emoner. c. 13. p. 241.*

*b Barnes c. Equivoc.*

*† V. Theophil. Rayn sive Emonerium adit. ad Disput. n. 4, 5, 6.*

*c. After Fa Barnes had writtē his Book against Equivocation, and other ways provoked the Jesuits, by order of the Pope, and by means of Albertus he was seized on, and carried to Rome, and there died mad in the Inquisition.*

*V. Leodegār. Quintin. Hæduum advers. Th. Hurtao p. 71. where the Jesuit relates the story.*

*Soto de rat. seg. secre. memb 3. qu. 3. concl. 4. Adrian 6. quod l. 11. ad. 2. Princip. C. C. Sylv. st. v. Juram.*

which a man is bound to declare. But this subtilty the latter Casuists will by no means admit of, and allow denying the fact in any words;

*Cosm. Philarchus de Offic. Sa-  
cerd. t. 1. p. 2. l. 3. c. 14.  
Nazar. ubi supra n. 9.  
Sayr. Clav. Reg. l. 12. c. 17. n. 24.*

and say of him, *that he was afraid where no fear was.* They therefore say, it is enough that a witness answers to *what ought to have been the intention of the Judge, whatever his actual intention was;* and there-

*Suarez de  
juram. l. 3.  
c. 10. n. 3.*

fore if a man supposes the Judge not to proceed legally against him, he may not only deny the fact he knows, but swear to that denial, provided he keeps this in his mind *that he denied any such fact which be-*

*\* Mich. de  
Palacio in  
4. d. 21.*

*disp. 2. Te-  
stis verè dicit Nescio quom verè sciat, quia testis non tenetur respondere Judici secundum suam iniquitatem, sed secundum  
id quod potest ut Judex, & secundum mentem quam debet habere, etiamsi illam non habeat. Mich. Salon. 2. 2. q. 69.  
art. 2. controu. 11.*

*longed to the Judges conscience; or that he did not do it publickly, \** and in this case, say they, *there is neither lye nor perjury.*

*Quando  
igitur reus  
negat se  
crimen fe-  
cisse, id in  
animo ha-  
bere debet,  
ut negat se  
non com-  
mississe tale  
crimen de  
quo Judex  
interrogare  
debeat.*

Others say, no more is necessary to avoid a lye, or perjury in such cases, but only to understand the word of denial with this restriction *so as to be bound to tell you.* And this is the common case which Parsons and others speak of. If a man be examined upon oath *whether he be a Priest*

*or not,* they say he may with a safe conscience deny it with that poor reservation in his mind; and that is a known rule in this case among them *that what a man may truly say, he may truly swear.* So that a Priest may not only say, but swear he is none, and yet by this admirable art neither tell a lye, nor forswear himself.

*Et cum hæc responsio sit vera, nullum erit peccatum, etiamsi intercedat juramentum Lud. Carbo tr. de restit. q. 19. conc. 8.*

*Quamvis regulariter adjuratus respondere debeat adjuranti juxta mentem ejus, fallit tamen ea doctrina, quando alia mente quam debet adjuratur; tunc enim sufficit ut respondeat verum secundum mentem & intentionem suam, licet falsum sit secundum mentem interrogantis, & adjurantis. Greg. Sayr. Clav. Reg. l. 12. c. 17. n. 21, &c.*

*Parson's Treatise of Mirigation, c. 8. n. 20. 51, 57. c. 9. n. 2.*

Some of later times being made sensible of the pernicious consequences of the imputation of such doctrines and practices to their Church have endeavoured to qualifie and restrain the *Abuse* of them. But upon due examination we shall find this to be only a greater art to avoid the *odium* of these things, and a design to deceive us with a greater fineness. For they allow the same words to be said either in *Oaths* or *Testimonies*, i. e. a plain denial of what they know to be true, but only differ from the other as to the way of excusing such a denial from being a lye: which say they, *depends on the circumstances of denying,*

*Malder-  
de abusu  
restric-  
mental. c.  
10. Sect. 1.  
p. 64.  
Emonerius  
splend. ve-  
rit. moral.  
c. 16.*

*and not upon the reservation of the Mind.* So Malderus himself grants, that a guilty person being examined upon a capital Offence, may deny the fact with this reservation, *so as to be bound to tell it;* but then he saith, *the circumstances give that sense and not the reservation in his mind.* But saith Emonerius (or rather a famous Jesuit under that name) *these circumstances only limit the words to such a sense which they cannot otherwise bear, because in such circumstances a man is not bound to declare what he knows, therefore, saith he, where-ever there is a reasonable cause of concealing what a man knows, such mental reservations are to be understood, and so there is the same liberty allowed in practice.*

*Caramuel  
Haplotes  
sive de re-  
strict. men-  
tal. art. 13.  
p. 360.*

Among the late Casuists none hath seemed to have written with more pomp and vanity against *mental Restrictions* than Caramuel; yet he not only allows a *Confessor* to deny upon oath what he heard in *Confession;* but in case of *secret Murder* that a man may with a good conscience deny the Fact, tho' the Judge be competent and proceed according to due form



form of Law. What way can this be excused from a lye, since he saith, *a mental reservation will not do it?* He hath a fetch beyond this: *A Judge is only to proceed upon evidence; if there be no sufficient evidence against him, he may persist in denying it, because it cannot be fully proved, and therefore his denial, saith he, is of such a fact which he can proceed upon, and what cannot be proved is none in Law.* These are the shifts of those who seem most to oppose the Jesuitical art of *Equivocation*; and inveigh bitterly against it, as a thing wholly repugnant to the Truth of our words and the sincerity of our minds, and that Candour and Simplicity which ought to be in Christians.

*Quod igitur plene probari non potest; insectum civiliter & veritabiliter est, hoc est prudentum iudicio & estimatione ita se habet, ac si factum non esset. At que facta non sunt negari possunt; ergo etiam que secreto sunt facta. Caram. p. 362.*

But in my apprehension they had altogether as good take up with the dull way of lying, or with the common artifice of equivocation and mental reservation, as make use of such refinings as these.

But however, we gain this considerable advantage by them, that they do assure us, that mental reservations are so far from excusing the words spoken from being a lye, that they contain *a premeditated lye*; and so *the sin is the more aggravated by them*; that all such propositions are in themselves false, and designed only to deceive others, and so all the effect and consequence of lying follow them; that there is nothing so false but may be made true, nothing so true but may be made false by this means. *Caramuel* gives a remarkable instance of this kind in some of the Articles of the *Creed*; for by this way of *mental reservation* a man might truly say, *Christ was not born*, understanding it secretly, at *Constantinople*. He *did not suffer*, viz. at *Paris*. He *was not buried*, viz. in *Persia*. He *did not rise again*, viz. in *Japan*. Nor *ascended into Heaven*, viz. from *America*. So that by this blessed Art, the most abominable Heresies may be true Doctrine; and the most cursed Lyes prove precious Truths.

*Imò illà ipsa sua restrictiōe convincitur non precipitanter fuisse mentitus, sed quodammodo medicatus fuisse mendacium quod gravitatem peccati auget. Malder. de abusu restr. ment. c. 10. Sect 2 p. 70. Ut quidvis licet falsissimum verum fieri possit restrictiōe sola mentali. Id. p. 28: Caramuel. ib. art 2o concil. 4. p. 28:*

Besides, they confess that *it takes away all confidence in mens words*, *Th. Ab.* and *destroys all sincerity of conversation, and the very inclination to speak Truth*: For as *Malderus* well observes, *there is no reason men should not have the same liberty in private conversation which is allowed them before an incompetent Judge*: and some *Jesuites* themselves grant, *that if the common use of it be allowed, there can be no security as to mens words, there being nothing so false but it may be made true in this way.* And no man can be charged with a lie till they know his heart; nor the *Devil* himself in all his *lying Oracles*; who surely had wit enough to make some secret reservation; and a very little will serve for that according to *Suarez*, who saith, *it is enough in the general, that a man intend to affirm or deny in some true sense*; although he know not what.

Since from their own Authors, we thus far understand the mischievous consequence of these practices, it will not be amiss to set down briefly the *cases*, wherein they are commonly allowed.

I. In general, *Where-ever there is a just and reasonable Cause for concealing of Truth.* For that is the most general rule they give in this case; where a man is not bound to speak his whole mind, he may utter one half, and reserve the other half of one entire proposition. Now a *just and reasonable Cause* with them is *declining of danger, or obtaining any advantage to themselves either as to body, honour, or estate.* In all such Cases they allow that a

*Less. de jur. sit. & jure l. 2. c. 42. du. 9. m. 47. Potest aliquis jurare simpliciter falsum addendo aliquid mente, ex quo juramentum sit verum quoties in-*

tervenit iusta causa. Iusta causa esse potest necessitas, vel utilitas ad salutem corporis, honoris, rerum familiarum, vel etiam quando iniusta interrogatio proponitur. Dian. part. 3. tr. 6. resol. 30.

Sed iuramentum cum deficit sola discretio, non est peccatum mortale. Sanch. in sum. tom. 1. l. 3. c. 6. n. 22. aliique.

man may speak what is simply false and swear to it too, provided that he hold something in his mind which makes it true. But if a man happen to do it without just cause, what then? doth he lye? doth he forswear himself? by no means. But he is guilty of Indiscretion: and is that all? then they tell him for his comfort, that an Oath that wants only discretion is no mortal sin.

2. If a man be barred the use of Equivocation, or Mental Reservation, that doth not hinder the using it, even in renouncing Equivocation. Even

Soto de reservatione te-  
gend secreti. mem. 3. q. 3. concl. 4.  
Soto himself saith, that if a Magistrate requires from a person to speak simply all he knows of such a matter, i. e. without any reservation; a man may still answer he knows nothing of it; i. e. with this reservation, to tell him. But what if in particular, saith he, he asks about a secret Murder; whether Peter killed John, which he alone saw, doth it not seem to be a lye for him to say, he knows nothing of it? No, saith he; for still the meaning is, so as he is bound to tell. F. Parsons speaks home to this point; Suppose,

Barns c. Equivoca-  
tio. Sect. 2. c. n. 3. p. 174. Sect. 2. 2. n. 7.  
Jac. de Graffis de-  
cis. aurea l. 1. c. 23. n. 3.  
pose, saith he, a Judge asks a man whether he doth equivocate or not? He may answer, Not, but with another equivocation. But if he still suspects he equivocates, what then is to be done; he may deny it with another equivocation; and so, toties quoties, as often as he asks, the other may deny and still with a farther equivocation. Suppose a Priest, saith Jacob. à Graffis, be asked a thing he heard in confession, may he deny that he knew it? Yes saith he, and swear it too; because he knew it not as man. But suppose he be asked whether he knew it not as man, but as God? He may deny it still,

Quando quis inique interrogat, excludendo omnem equivocationem, posse interrogatum uti equivocatione apponendo aliquam particulam in mente, per quam verum efficiatur iuramentum, Bonacina To. 2. disp. 4. q. 1. punct. 12. n. 5.

with another equivocation, i. e. not as God himself, but as his Minister. What if a Judge, saith Bonacina, be so unreasonable to bar all equivocation? yet the respondent may equivocate still. And he cites several others of theirs who defended this practice; and therefore Barns saith, it is so slippery a thing, that the faster you think to hold it, the sooner it gets from you.

3. If a man be charged with a secret crime, which cannot be sufficiently proved by Testimonies beyond all exception, he may safely

Less. de iur. & iur. re, l. 7. c. 31. dub. 3. n. 8.  
deny it, tho' he were guilty of it. If a man, saith Lessius, can make any exception against the Witnesses, or shew that it was a report spread abroad by men, that bore ill-will to him, or that there was some mistake in it, he is not bound to confess the truth, and consequently he may deny it with a reservation. Nay, as long as the thing is so secret, that a man may probably defend himself, and hope to escape, he may persist in denying the fact; although the Judge do proceed according to due Form of Law, saith the same

Filliuc. Mor. Quest. tr. 40. c. 9. n. 266. Sa. Aphorism. judicial. Actus. n. 3.  
Lessius. It is no mortal sin to deny it, saith Filliucius. Not, tho' others be like to suffer for it, saith Em. Sa; especially if the punishment be capital, saith Filliucius and others in him. But if a man doth suspect whether the Judge doth proceed according to due form of Law, which depends upon his opinion of the Proofs and Witnesses brought against him, they make no question then, but he may deny the fact by help of an easie reservation in his mind.

4. If a man hath denied the Fact when he was bound to confess it in Court, according to their rules, yet they will not allow that he is

Navarr. Man. c. 25. n. 38. Dian. Sum. v. Reus n. 12. Jac. de Graffis. l. 3. c. 7. n. 17. Escobar.

bound to confess it before execution. Because, saith Navarr, confession to a Priest and absolution by him is sufficient for salvation, his Confessor ought not to put him upon

upon

upon it, saith Diana. Not unless it be clearer than Noon-day that the Law compels them to it, say others; i. e. that they have no kind of exceptions again the judicial proceedings. Some thought they ought then to do it for the reputation of the Judges who otherwise might suffer in the esteem of the People as condemning innocent persons; but this is over-ruled by the generality of the later Casuists, because the presumption is always on the side of the Judges, when they proceed according to Law. But one of the latest Casuists hath given an excellent Reason against \* publick Confession, because they are accounted Cowards and Fools that make it.

rr. 6. ex. 6. n. 62. Azor. p. 3. l. 13. c. 25. dub. 5. Sayr. Clar. Regl. 12. i. 17. Layman. l. 3. rr. 6. c. 5. n. 3. Sa Aphor. de Reo. n. 5, 6. Bass. reus p. 5. n. 15.

Lugo de Justit & jure Tom. 2. Disp. 40.

Señ. r. n. 19. \* Imo pusillanimes & stulti habentur si ea fateantur. Di castillo de juramento disp. 2. dub. 12. n. 377.

5. Where the Judge is supposed incompetent, they make no question of the use of Equivocation and Mental Reservation in denying the crimes they are guilty of. An incompetent Judge is one that wants lawful jurisdiction over the person; as if a Lay-man pretend to judge one in Orders according to their doctrine of exemption; or if a Heretick or excommunicated Person take upon him to judge good Catholicks.

And thus they look on all our Judges as incompetent; of which, besides the general charge of Heresie, we have this particular evidence. When the unquietness of the Jesuites gave just occasion to those severe Laws which were made after the Bull of Pius V. several cases were proposed at Rome for Resolution in order to the better conduct of their affairs here; and among the rest this, Suppose an Oath be required in an Heretical Court before incompetent Judges (quales sunt omnes nunc in Anglia, as all are now in England) how far doth such an Oath bind? The Answer is, no farther than the Person that swears did intend it should: and he may either refuse the Oath, or he may Sophisticè jurare & Sophisticè respondere: he may swear and answer with juggling and equivocation: and he that discovers any by vertue of his Oath commits a double sin. And in the Answers approved by Pius V. our Judges are declared incompetent, and our Courts of Judicature unlawful Courts; and therefore no man by his Oath is bound to confess any thing to the prejudice of the Catholick Cause; nor to answer according to the intention of the Judge, but in some true sense of his own.

G. Abbot. de Mendac. p. 41, 42. & in pref. p. 9. &c.

So that we not only see the doctrine and practice of equivocation approved by the Holy See, but all legal Authority among us utterly rejected as having no jurisdiction over them. And all who allow this practice do thereby discover that what they call Heresie doth take away the civil Rights and Properties of Men. For if Heresie makes our Judges incompetent, by necessary consequence it must deprive the King of the right to his Throne, it must take away all the obligation of our Laws, and the title every man hath to his Estate. Such pernicious consequences do follow the wisdom of the Serpent, where it is not joynd with the innocence and simplicity of the Dove: and not only pernicious to Government, but to themselves too when these arts are understood and discovered; for what security can there be from the most solemn Oaths, the most deep and serious protestations of those persons who at the same time believe that none of these things do bind them, but by some secret reserve they may turn the sense quite another way than we imagined, and when they pretend the greatest simplicity and seem to renounce all equivocation, may then equivocate the most of all? If men had invented ways

to fill the world with perpetual jealousies and suspicions of their practices and intentions, they could never have thought of any more effectual than these two, that *Herese*, or differing in opinion from them, deprives them of their civil rights, and that they may deny what is true, and swear to what is false, and promise what they never mean to perform by vertue of some secret reservation in their minds. How can they live as fellow-subjects with others who do not own the same Authority, the same Laws, the same Magistrates, who look on all *Hereticks* in a *State of Usurpation*, and all judicial proceedings against them as meer force and violence, and parallel the case of answering in our *Courts* with that of *Oaths* and *Promises* to *Thieves* and *Robbers*? for upon these grounds all the bonds of Society are dissolved where what they call *Herese* prevails; and no obligation can lie upon them by vertue of any Laws, or Oaths, or Promises. I do not say that particular persons may not, upon common principles of honesty, make conscience of these things: but I speak of what follows from these allowed principles and practices among them, and what may be justly expected by vertue of them. How can we be sure that any man means what he saith, when he holds it lawful to reserve a meaning quite different from his words? What can Oaths signifie to the satisfaction of others; when it is impossible to understand in what sense they swear? and when they pretend the greatest simplicity in renouncing all arts, may then by allowance of their *Casuits* use them the most of all? But can men upon sober reflections think it any part of *true Wisdom* to lose all the force of their *Oaths* and *Promises* with those among whom they live? Will they never stand in need of being believed or trusted? And then, if they desire it never so much, how can they recover any credit without plain disowning all such principles, and in such a way if such can be found out, which is incapable of any mental reservation. Such kind of Artifices can only serve for a time, but when once they are thoroughly understood, they fall heavily upon those that use them. For although frost and fraud may hold for a while, yet according to the true saying, they both have dirty ends. The sum of what I have to say is this, That however *Simplicity* and *sincerity* of *conversation* may in some particular circumstances expose men to greater danger and difficulties than fraud and deceit may do; yet upon the whole matter considering the consequences of both, it will be found much greater *Wisdom* always to preserve the *innocency* of the *Dove*, than to use the greatest *subtilty* of the *Serpent* without it. Which although it may seem to take off from the *fineness* of the *Serpents Wisdom*, yet it adds very much to the *safety* and *soundness* of it.

### III. Prudent simplicity lies in the practice of *Meekness* and *Patience*.

The *Serpent* doth not imploy its subtilty only in defending it self and avoiding dangers, but in watching its opportunity to do mischief, \* being both revengeful and insidious: therefore we read of *the Adder in the path* that lies undiscerned in the sands, *that biteth the horsebeels so that the rider shall fall backward*. It doth mischief secretly, spitefully and artificially, by fit means and instruments. But Christ would have his Disciples to be *Wise to that which is good, but simple or harmless concerning evil*; so *S. Paul* explains these words of our Saviour, *Be ye wise as Serpents and harmless as Doves*. Which although they want no *Gall*, yet do not shew that they have any, whatsoever usage they meet with. Christ foretels

Molan. de  
fide heret.  
serv. l. 4.  
c. 8.

Barns de  
Equivo-  
cat. Sect.  
23. n. 2.  
p. 194.

\* Arist. hist.  
Anim. l. 1.  
c. 1.  
Gen. 49.  
17.

Rom. 16.  
19.

foretels his Disciples the injuries and reproaches they were like to suffer under, that their condition was like to be no better than that of *Sheep in the midst of Wolves*; notwithstanding he would not suffer them to be furious as wild Beasts, or cruel and rapacious as the Birds of prey; but in gentleness and meekness and patience to be as *harmless as Doves*. Not, as though Christianity did forbid men the just and lawful ways of preserving themselves, but it takes away all malice and hatred and revenge and cruelty out of men's minds; it softens and sweetens and calms the tempers of men, and fills them with Kindness and Goodwill even to their enemies, *not being overcome with evil, but overcoming evil with good*. Never any Religion in the world was such an enemy to all kind of Malice, Revenge and Cruelty as the Christian; that which we call *good nature* seems to come very near that Divine grace which S. Paul calls *Charity*, and doth so admirably describe and so highly extol above miraculous gifts and some of the greatest graces. *Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not it self; is not puffed up; doth not behave it self unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, i. e. in short, it hopes, believes, and does the greatest good; it modestly bears and heartily forgives the greatest evil.* And herein consists that *Dove-like-temper*, which Christ would have his Disciples remarkable for. Which however it may be despised and scorned by furious and self-willed men, yet upon consideration it will be found a great part of the *Wisdom of living*. Revenge is the pleasure only of weak and disorderly minds: for what real satisfaction can anothers loss or pain give to any considering man? The only pretence or colour for it is the preventing more mischief coming on ones self; and yet every act of revenge is a fresh provocation; so that either quarrels must continue without end, or some body must think it their Wisdom to forgive at last. And if so, I appeal to any man's understanding whether it were not greater Wisdom to have prevented at first all the vexation and disquiet, besides other inconveniencies, which must needs follow a continued quarrel. If any thing tend to make a man's life easie and pleasant to himself and others, it is innocency, and gentleness, and patience, and doing good and virtuous things, whatever the world thinks of them.

And this was it which recommended the *Christian Religion* to the World, that its great business and design was, to perswade the *disobedient to the Wisdom of the just*; by laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and all evil speakings; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; and if when they did well they suffered for it, by taking it patiently; following therein the example of Christ himself, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatned not, but committed himself to him that judged righteously. These are the instructions of S. Peter to the primitive Christians, and the ways he judged most effectual to promote the honour of their Religion, among those who were most apt to think and speak evil of it. And because that was a very corrupt and a busie and factious age, especially in those Cities where the *Jews and Gentiles* inhabited together, therefore he adviseth the *Christians* not only to purity and innocency, but to a quiet submission to Authority, and however the *Jews* looked on *Heathen Government* as a meer appointment of men; yet he commands them to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether

Mat. 5. 44.  
Rom. 12.  
21.

1 Cor. 13  
4, 5, 6, 7.

Luke 1. 17.  
1 Pet. 2. 1.  
3. 9. 2. 20,  
21, 22, 23.

2. 11, 12.

13, 14, whether it was the Imperial, the Proconsular, or the Prætorian power, not considering so much the Persons imploy'd, as the design of the Institution, which was for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the Will of God, that with this sort of well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, who are apt to quarrel with Religion, especially when it appears new, as that which gives occasion to many disturbances of the Civil Government. And that there might be no colour for any such cavil against *Christianity*, no Religion that ever was, did so much enforce the duty of obedience as *Christ* and his *Apostles* did, 15. and that upon the greatest and most weighty considerations, for *Conscience sake*, for the *Lord's sake*, for their Religions sake. For, consider I pray, if the Doctrine of *Christ* had given encouragement to faction and rebellion under pretence of it, if *S. Peter* himself had taken upon him to dispose of Crowns and Scepters, or had absolved *Christians* from their Allegiance, even to their greatest persecutors, what a blot this had been upon the whole Religion, such as all the blood of the *Martyrs* could never have washed off. For it would have made the condition of Princes more precarious, and the duty of Subjects more loose and uncertain, and all Nations that regarded their own peace and safety shy of entertaining a Doctrine which would give so much countenance to Rebellion. And yet among all the causes alledged for the persecution of *Christians*, this was never once suggested, which would not have been omitted (if any such thing had been owned by the *Christians*) by persons so jealous of their Power, as the *Roman Emperours* were. It is an intolerable reproach to *Christianity* to impute their patient submission to Authority to their weakness and want of force: which is all one as to say, they would have resisted if they durst: this is not to make them harmless as *Doves*, but to have too much of the subtilty of the *Serpent*, in pretending to be innocent when they only wanted an opportunity to do mischief.

Bell. de  
Rom. Font.  
l. 5. c. 7.

But the security the *Christian Religion* gave to Government was from the principles and precepts of it, the design of its Doctrine as well as the practice of its followers. So that if their Religion were true, it did oblige them to all acts of charity and kindness, to meekness and patience, to peaceableness and a quiet and prudent behaviour in all the changes of humane affairs.

From what hath been already said, it is no hard matter to understand the Reason why our Saviour gave such directions to his *Apostles*, and made choice of such means to promote his Religion; because they would hereby see, that he sent not his *Apostles* upon any ambitious or secular design, not to disturb Governments upon pretence of setting up a new Monarchy in it either of *Christ* or his pretended *Vicar*; but to prepare men for another World by the Love of God and our Neighbour, by subduing our lusts and taking off our affections from present things; and because he knew what persecutions would follow his Doctrine, he adviseth his Disciples neither to suffer as *Fools*, nor as evil-doers, but to be wise as *Serpents* and harmless as *Doves*.

Let no man then think our Religion weakens their understanding, or impairs their discretion, or puts men upon doing foolish and imprudent things. As it is founded on the best reason, so it brings men to the best temper, and governs their actions by rules of the truest Wisdom; not only as it provides for the most desirable end in another world, but even in this, it secures most the honour, interest and safety of men; and

and if circumstances happen to be hard here, it gives the highest assurance of an infinite and eternal recompence. But if men under a pretence of zeal for Religion do wicked things, and carry on treacherous and malicious designs, if instead of directing men's Consciences in the ways of innocence and goodness, they teach them the art of *putting tricks on God Almighty*, (as one called the *Casuistical Divinity* of the *Jesuites*) or the way of breaking his Laws by certain *shifts* and *evasions*; if instead of meekness and patience they put men upon acts of revenge and cruelty; if instead of promoting peace and tranquillity in the world, they plot mischief and stir up faction and rebellion, we are sure whose Disciples soever they pretend to be, they are none of Christ's; for although they should not all be capable of being *wise as Serpents*, yet they are bound to be *harmless as Doves*.

*Nicol. Faber apud Wendrock. in Epist. Provinc. 8. Nor. 3.*

N n THE

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THE

# Mischief of Separation,

IN A

# SERMON

Preached at

## Guild-Hall Chapel

Before the

# LORD - MAYOR, &c.



TO



T O

The Right Honourable

Sir Robert Clayton,

Lord Mayor of the City of London.

My Lord,

**I**N Obedience to your Lordship's Order I now present to your hands, not only the Sermon you lately heard, but those Additions which the straits of time would not then permit me to deliver. In all which, I was so far from intending to stir up the Magistrates and Judges to a Persecution of Dissenters, as some ill Men have reported, that my only design was, to prevent any occasion of it, by finding out a certain foundation for a lasting Union among our selves: Which is impossible to be attained, till men are convinced of the Evil and Danger of the present Separation; it being carried on by such Principles as not only overthrow the present Constitution of our Church, but any other whatsoever. For, if it be lawful to separate on a pretence of greater Purity, where there is an Agreement in Doctrine, and the Substantial Parts of Worship, as is acknowledged in our Case; then a bare difference of opinion as to some circumstances of Worship and the best constitution of Churches will be sufficient ground to break Communion and to set up new Churches; Which, considering the great variety of Mens fancies about these matters, is to make an infinite Divisibility in Churches, without any possible stop to farther Separation. But, if after themselves are pleased with condescensions to their own minds, any think it fit that others should be tied up, notwithstanding their dissatisfaction; the World will judge it too great partiality in them to think that none ought to separate but themselves, that the same Reason will hold against themselves in the judgment of others; it thereby appearing, that it is not Uniformity they dislike, but that they do not prescribe the Terms of it.

N n 2

But,

*But, my Lord, I intend not to argue the Case of Separation here, (which is at large done in the following Discourse) but only to shew, how necessary it was in order to the laying a Foundation for Peace and Unity, to have this matter thoroughly discussed. And if once the People be brought to understand and practise their duty as to Communion with our Churches, other Difficulties which obstruct our Union will be more easily removed.*

*I have endeavoured to pursue my design in a way suitable to the nature of it, without sharp and provoking reflexions on the Persons of any; which often set Friends at distance, but never reconciled or convinced Adversaries. However I must expect the Censures of such who either make our Divisions, or make use of them for their own ends: but I am contented to be made a Sacrifice, if thereby I might close up the Breaches among us.*

*God Almighty bless this great City and your Lordships care in the Government of it; and grant that in this day we may yet know the things that belong to our Peace, and to the preservation of the true Protestant Religion among us. I am,*

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most Faithful

and Obedient Servant,

*Edward Stillingfleet.*

S E R-

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SERMON XVIII.

OF THE

Mischief of Separation,

Preached at

Guild-Hall Chapel

Before the

LORD - M A Y O R, &c.

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PHIL. III. 16.

*Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things.*

**A**lthough the *Christian Religion* doth lay the greatest obligations on Mankind to *Peace* and *Unity*, by the strictest commands, the highest examples, and the most prevailing arguments; yet so much have the passions and interests of men overway'd the sense of their duty, that as nothing ought to be more in our *wishes*, so nothing seems more remote from our *hopes*, than the *Universal Peace* of the *Christian World*. Not that there is any impossibility in the thing, or any considerable difficulty, if all men were such Christians as they ought to be; but as long as men pursue their several factions and designs under the colour and pretence of zeal for Religion; if they did not find Names and Parties ready framed, that were suitable to their ends, the difference of their designs would make them. So that till mens corruptions are mortified, and their passions subdued to a greater degree than the world hath yet found them, it is in vain to expect a state of peace and tranquillity in the Church. We need not go far from home for a sufficient evidence of this; for although our differences are such as the wiser Protestants abroad not only condemn but wonder at them; yet it hath hitherto puzzled the wisest persons among us to find out ways to compose them; not so much from the distance of mens opinions and practices, as the strength of their prejudices and inclinations. What those

Judges 5.  
15, 16. those *divisions of Reuben* of old were, which caused *such thoughts and searching of heart*, we neither well understand, nor doth it much concern us: but the continuance, if not the widening of the unhappy breaches among our selves do give just cause for many sad reflections. When neither the miseries we have felt, nor the calamities we fear; neither the terrible judgments of God upon us, nor the unexpected deliverances vouchsafed to us, nor the common danger we are yet in, have abated mens heats, or allayed their passions, or made them more willing to unite with our established Church and Religion. But instead of that, some rather stand at a great distance if not defiance, and seem to entertain themselves with hopes of new revolutions; others raise fresh calumnies and reproaches, as well as revive and spread abroad old ones; as though their business were to make our breaches wider, and to exasperate mens spirits against each other; at such a time, when Reason and common security, and above all our Religion obliges us to

Rom. 14.  
19. *follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edifie another*; and not such as tend to our mutual destruction; as most certainly our divisions and animosities do. Yet all parties pretend to a zeal for Peace, so they may have it in their own way: by which it appears that it is not Peace they aim at, but Victory; nor Unity so much as having their own wills. Those of the *Roman Church* make great boasts of their Unity and the effectual means they have to preserve it; but God deliver us from such cruel ways of Peace, and such destructive means of Unity as Treachery and Assassinations, and an Inquisition. *Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known.* But it were happy for us, if all those who agree in renouncing the Errors and Corruptions of the Roman Church, could as easily joyn together in the great duties of our common Religion, that is, in our Prayers, and Praises, and Sacraments, and all solemn acts of Divine Worship. For this would not only take off the reproach of our Adversaries, who continually upbraid us with our Schisms and Separations, but it would mightily tend to abate mens passions, and to remove their prejudices, and to dispose their inclinations, and thereby lay a foundation for a blessed Union among our selves, which would frustrate the great design of our enemies upon us, who expect to see that Religion destroyed by our own folly, which they could not otherwise hope to accomplish by their utmost care and endeavour. And we may justly hope for a greater blessing of God upon us, when we offer up our joint Prayers and Devotions to him, *lifting up*, as St. Paul speaks, *holy hands without wrath and disputing.* This is therefore a thing of so great consequence to our Peace and Union, that tends so much to the Honour of God, and our common Safety and Preservation; that no person who hath any real concernment for these things, can deny it to be not only just and fitting, but in our circumstances necessary to be done, if it can be made appear to be lawfull, or that they can do it with a good Conscience.

And this is the subject I design to speak to at this time; and for that purpose have made choice of these words of the Apostle, *Nevertheless whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things.*

For our better understanding the full scope and meaning of the Apostle in these words, we are to consider, that an unhappy Schism, or wilfull breach of the Churches Unity, had begun in the Apostles times,  
upon

upon the difference that arose concerning the necessity of keeping the Law of *Moses*. And that which made the *Schism* the more dangerous, was, that the first beginners of it pretended a Commission from the Apostles themselves at *Jerusalem*, and were extremely busie and industrious to gain and keep up a Party to themselves in the most flourishing Churches planted by the Apostles. At *Antioch* they bore so great a sway, that *St. Peter* himself complied with them, and not only other Jews, but *Barnabas* also was carried away with their dissimulation. Infomuch that had it not been for the courage and resolution of *St. Paul*, all the Gentile Christians had been either forced to a compliance with the Jews, or to a perpetual Schism, (of which *St. Peter* had been in probability the Head, and not of the Churches Unity, if *St. Paul* had not vigorously opposed so dangerous a compliance.) But finding so good success in his endeavours at *Antioch*, he pursues those false Apostles, who made it their business to divide and separate the Christians from each others Communion, through all the Churches where they had, or were like to make any great impression. He writes his *Epistle* to the *Galatians* purposely against them: he warns the Christians at *Rome* of them. Now I beseech you Brethren mark them which cause Divisions and Offences contrary to the Doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. And because he had understood they had been busie at *Philippi* to make a party there too, therefore the Apostle, to prevent their designs, makes use of this following method.

1. He exhorts the *Philippians* to an unanimous and constant resolution, in holding fast to the faith of the Gospel, in spite of all the threats and malice of their enemies: *That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries.* If once the fears of troubles and persecutions make men afraid to own and maintain their Religion; it will be an easie matter for their enemies first to divide and then to subdue them. But their courage and unanimity in a good cause baffles the attempts of the most daring Adversaries, and makes them willing to retreat when they see they can neither disunite them nor make them afraid.

2. He beseeches them in the most vehement and affectionate manner, not to give way to any differences or divisions among them, *If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies; fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love; being of one accord, of one mind.* As though he had said unto them, I have seen the miserable effects of divisions in other Churches already; how our Religion hath been reproached, the Gospel hindred, and the Cross of Christ rendred of little or no effect by reason of them; let me therefore intreat you, if ye have any regard to the Peace and Welfare of your own Souls; if ye have any sense of your duty ye owe to one another as members of the same body; if ye have any tenderness or pity towards me, avoid the first tendencies to any breaches among you; entertain no unjust suspicions or jealousies of each other, shew all the kindness ye are able to your fellow members; live as those that are acted by the same soul (*συνουχοί*) carry on the same design; and as much as possible prevent any differences in opinions amongst you.

3. He warns them and gives cautions against some persons from whom their greatest danger was, *viz.* such as pretended a mighty zeal for the Law: And very well understanding the mischief of their designs under their

their specious pretences, he bestows very severe characters upon them, *vers. 2. Beware of Dogs; beware of Evil workers; beware of the Concision.* All which Characters relate to the breaches and divisions which they made in the Christian Churches; which like *Dogs* they did tear in pieces, and thereby did unspeakable mischief, and so were *Evil workers*; and by the *Concision* *St. Chrysostom* understands such a cutting in pieces as tends to the destruction of a thing; and therefore, saith he, the Apostle called them *κατατομήν*, ὅτι τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν ἐπειρῶντο κατατέμεναι because they endeavoured to cut in pieces, and thereby to destroy the Church of God. But lest they should give out that *St. Paul* spoke this out of a particular pique he had taken up against the Law of *Moses*, he declares that as to the spiritual intention and design of the Law it was accomplished in Christians, *vers. 3. For we are the Circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoyce in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.* And, for his own part, he had as much reason to glory in legal privileges as any of them all, *vers. 4, 5, 6.* but the excellency of the Gospel of *Christ* had so prevailed upon his mind, that he now despised the things he valued before, and made it his whole business to attain to the glorious reward which this Religion promiseth. This he pursues from *vers. 7. to vers. 15.*

4. Having done this, he persuades all good Christians to do as he did, *vers. 15. Let us therefore, as many, as be perfect be thus minded.* But because many disputes and differences as to opinion and practice might happen among them, he therefore lays down two Rules for them to govern themselves by.

1. If any happen'd to differ from the body of Christians they lived with, they should do it with great Modesty and Humility, not breaking out into factions and divisions, but waiting for farther information, which they may expect that God will give upon a diligent and sober use of the best means; *And if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.* By leaving them to God's immediate care for farther illumination, he doth not bid them depend upon extraordinary revelation; but requires them to wait upon God in his own way; without proceeding with the false Apostles to the ways of Faction and Separation, and in the mean time to go as far as they could.

2. For those who were come to a firmness and settlement of judgment upon the Christian principles, he charges them by all means to preserve Unity and Peace among themselves. *Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same Rule, let us mind the same things.*

Wherein the Apostle supposes two things.

I. The necessity of one fixed and certain Rule, notwithstanding the different attainments among Christians. *Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same Rule.*

II. The duty and obligation which lies upon the best Christians to observe it. He doth not speak to the ignorant and unthinking multitude; not to the licentious Rabble, nor to the carnal and worldly Church; which some think are only desirous of Uniformity; but to the very best Christians; to those who had got the start of others (as the words here signifie) that they would be an example of Peace and Unity to their Brethren.

I. *The necessity of one fixed and certain Rule, notwithstanding the different attainments of Christians.* Τὸ αὐτὰς σοιχεῖν ἡγάσθη which Phrase seems to be a continuation of the former allusion to a Race. For, as *Eustathius* observes, the first thing the Greeks were wont to do as to their Exercises, was to circumscribe the bounds within which they were to be performed. That which fixed and determined these limits was called Κανὼν by the Greeks, and *Regula* and *Lineæ* by the Latines: thence *transflire lineas* in *Cicero* is to commit a fault, to break the bounds within which we are confined.

Χάρον μὲν  
πρῶτον δὲ  
εὐετρίον,  
Iliad. 3.

All the question is, what the Apostle means by this *Rule*, whether only a *Rule of Charity* and mutual forbearance, with a liberty of different practice; or such a *Rule* which limits and determines the manner of practice. It cannot be the former, because that is the case the Apostle had spoken to just before. *If in any thing ye be otherwise minded*; therefore now subjoyning this with respect to those who had gone beyond them, he doth imply such an agreement and uniformity of Practice as doth lie in observing the same standing *Rule*. For which we must consider, that they understood already what orders and directions he had given them when a Church was first formed among them; and therefore when the Apostle mentions a *Rule*, without declaring what it was, we have reason to believe it was such a *Rule* which they very well knew which he had given to them before. So we find elsewhere the Apostle refers to such *Rules of Government and Order*, which he had given to other Churches, and were already received and practised among them. For the *Apostles* did not write their *Epistles* for the founding of Churches, but they were already in being; only they took notice of any disorders among them, and reformed abuses, and left some things to *their own* directions, when they should come among them. *And the rest will I set in order when I come. As the Lord, hath called every one, so let him walk; And so ordain I in all the Churches.* Which shews that the *Apostles* did not leave all persons to act as they judged fit, but did make *Rules* determining their practice, and obliging them to uniformity therein. For might not men pretend that these were not things in themselves necessary, and might be scrupled by some Persons, and therefore were not fit to be imposed upon any? But I do not find that the *Apostles* on this account did forbear giving *Rules* in such cases, and to oblige *Christians* to observe them; and that not on the mere *Authority of Apostles*, but as *Governours of Churches*, whose business it is to take care of the welfare and preservation of them. There are many things which seem very little and inconsiderable in themselves, whose consequence and tendency is very great: and the wisdom of *Governours* lies in preventing the danger of little things, and keeping the zeal of well-meaning persons within its due bounds. For those who are engaged below, in the Valley, fighting in small parties, and pursuing their advantages, do run into the enemies Camp before they are aware of it; may receive an unexpected check from their Commanders in chief, who from the higher ground espie the hazard they are in by their over-forwardness, and the arts which their enemies use in drawing them into little Companies to fight separately, and the danger they may thereby bring upon the whole Army; and therefore send them a peremptory order to give over fighting by themselves and make good their retreat into the Body of the Army: They wonder, they

1 Cor. 7.  
34.  
1 Cor. 11.  
17.

complain, they think themselves hardly used; but no understanding man blames their Generals who regard their safety more than they do themselves, and know the allowing them the Liberty they desire, would endanger the destruction of them all. The Wisdom and Conduct of Governours, is quite another thing from the Zeal and Courage of inferiour Persons; who knowing their own resolution and integrity, think much to be controlled; but those who stand upon higher Ground and see farther than they can do, must be allowed a better capacity of judging what makes for the safety of the whole, than they can have: and such things which they look on in themselves, and therefore think them mean and trifling, the other look upon them in their consequence, and the influence they may have upon the publick safety. It were extremely desirable, that all good and usefull men should enjoy as much satisfaction as might be, but if it cannot be attained without running great hazards of unsettling all, it is then to be considered, whether the general safety or some mens particular satisfaction be the more desirible. And this is that which the example of the Apostles themselves gives us reason to consider, for although there were many doubts and scruples in their times about several Rites and Customs, yet the Apostles did give Rules in such cases, and bind Christians to observe them; as we find in that famous decree made upon great deliberation, in a Council of the Apostles at *Jerusalem*; wherein they determined those things which they knew were then scrupled, and continued so to be afterwards, where-ever the Judaizing Christians prevailed. But notwithstanding all their dissatisfaction, the Apostles continued the same Rule; and *St. Paul* here requires the most forward Christians to mind their Rule, and to preserve Peace and Unity among themselves.

Act. 15. 28.

*But doth not St. Paul in the 14th Chapter of his Epistle to the Romans lay down quite another Rule, viz. only of mutual forbearance in such Cases, where men are unsatisfied in Conscience?*

I answer, that the Apostle did act like a prudent Governour, and in such a manner, as he thought did most tend to the propagation of the Gospel, and the good of particular Churches. In some Churches that consisted most of *Jews*, as the Church of *Rome* at this time did, and where they did not impose the necessity of keeping the Law on the Gentile Christians (as we do not find they did at *Rome*) the Apostle was willing to have the Law buried as decently, and with as little noise as might be; and therefore in this case he perswades both parties to Forbearance and Charity, in avoiding *the judging and censuring one another*, since *they had an equal regard to the honour of God in what they did*. But in those Churches, where the false Apostles made use of this pretence, of the Levitical Law being still in force, to divide the Churches, and to separate the Communion of Christians; there the Apostle bids them beware of them, and their practices; as being of a dangerous and pernicious consequence. So that the preserving the Peace of the Church, and preventing Separation was the great measure, according to which, the Apostle gave his directions; and that makes him insist so much on this advice to the *Philippians*, that whatever their attainments in Christianity were, they should *walk by the same Rule, and mind the same Things*.

Rom. 14.  
3, 6, 10.

II. We take notice of the Duty and Obligation that lies on the best Christians, *to walk by the same Rule, to mind the same Things*.

From whence arise two very considerable Enquiries.

I. How



1. How far the obligation doth extend to comply with an established Rule; and to preserve the Peace of the Church we live in?

2. What is to be done, if men cannot come up to that Rule? For the Apostle speaks only of such as have attained so far; *Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same Rule.*

1. How far the obligation doth extend to comply with an established Rule, and to preserve the Peace of the Church we live in? This I think the more necessary to be spoken to, because I cannot persuade my self that so many scrupulous and conscientious men as are at this day among us would live so many years in a known sin; *i. e.* in a state of Separation from the Communion of a Church, which in Conscience they thought themselves obliged to communicate with. It must be certainly some great mistake in their judgments must lead them to this; (for I am by no means willing to impute it to passion and evil designs) and out of the hearty desire I have, if possible, to give satisfaction in this matter, I shall endeavour to search to the bottom of this dangerous mistake; to which we owe so much of our present distractions and fears.

But for the better preventing all misunderstanding the design of my Discourse, I desire it may be considered,

1. That I speak not of the Separation or distinct Communion of *whole Churches* from each other; which according to the Scripture, Antiquity and Reason, have a just right and power to govern and reform themselves. By *whole Churches*, I mean, the *Churches* of such *Nations*, which upon the decay of the *Roman Empire*, resumed their just right of Government to themselves, and upon their owning Christianity, incorporated into one Christian Society, under the same common ties and rules of Order and Government. Such as the Church of *Macedonia* would have been, if from being a Roman Province it had become a Christian Kingdom, and the Churches of *Theffalonica*, *Philippi* and the rest had united together. And so the several Churches of the *Lydian* or *Proconsular Asia*, if they had been united in one Kingdom, and governed by the same Authority under the same Rules, might have been truly called the *Lydian Church*. Just as several Families uniting make one Kingdom, which at first had a distinct and independent Power, but it would make strange confusion in the world to reduce Kingdoms back again to Families, because at first they were made up of them. Thus National Churches are National Societies of Christians, under the same Laws of Government and Rules of Worship. For the true notion of a *Church* is no more than of a Society of men united together for their Order and Government according to the Rules of the Christian Religion. And it is a great mistake to make the notion of a *Church* barely to relate to *Acts of Worship*; and consequently that the adequate notion of a Church, is *an Assembly for Divine Worship*; by which means they appropriate the Name of Churches to particular Congregations. Whereas if this held true, the Church must be dissolved as soon as the *Congregation* is broken up; but if they retain the nature of a Church, when they do not meet together for Worship, then there is some other bond that unites them; and whatever that is, it constitutes the Church. And if there be one Catholick Church consisting of multitudes of particular Churches consenting in one Faith; then why may there not be one National Church from the consent in the same Articles of Religion, and the same Rules of Government and Order of Worship? Nay if it be

mutual consent and agreement which makes a Church, then why may not National Societies agreeing together in the same Faith, and under the same Government and Discipline, be as truly and properly a Church, as any particular Congregation? For is not the *Kingdom of France* as truly a Kingdom consisting of so many Provinces; as the Kingdom of *Ivetot* once was in *Normandy*, which consisted of a very small Territory? Among the *Athenians*, from whom the use of the word *Ἐκκλησία* came into the Christian Church, it was taken for such an *Assembly*, which had the power of governing and determining matters of Religion as well as the Affairs of *State*. For the Senate of 500 being distributed into fifties according to the number of the Tribes, which succeeded by course through the year; and was then called *πρυτανεύουσα φάλη*, every one of these had four *Νόμοι* Ἐκκλησίαι, *Regular Assemblies*; in the last of which, an account of the *Sacrifices* was taken and of other matters which concerned Religion; as in the *Comitia Calata* at *Rome*. From whence we may observe, that it was not the meeting of one of the single Tribes, was called *Ἐκκλησία*, but the general Meeting of the Magistrates of the whole City and the People together. And in this sense I shall shew afterwards, the word was used in the first Ages of the Christian Church, as it comprehended the Ecclesiastical Governours and the People of whole Cities; and why many of these Cities being united under one civil Government, and the same Rules of Religion should not be called one National Church, I cannot understand. Which makes me wonder at those who say, *They cannot tell what we mean by the Church of England*; in short, we mean, that Society of Christian People which in this Nation are united under the same Profession of Faith, the same Laws of Government, and Rules of Divine Worship. And every Church thus constituted, we do assert to have a just right of governing it self, and of reforming Errors in Doctrine and Corruptions in Worship.

On which ground, we are acquitted from the imputation of Schism in the separation from the Roman Church, for we only resume our just rights, as the British Nation did, as to civil Government, upon the ruin of the Roman Empire.

2. I do not intend to speak of the terms upon which Persons are to be admitted among us to the exercise of the *Function* of the *Ministry*; but of the terms of *Lay-communion*, i. e. those which are necessary for all Persons to joyn in our Prayers, and Sacraments, and other Offices of Divine Worship. I will not say, there hath been a great deal of art used to confound these two, (and it is easie to discern to what purpose it is;) but I dare say, the Peoples not understanding the difference of these two cases hath been a great occasion of the present Separation. For in the judgment of some of the most impartial men of the Dissenters at this day, although they think the case of the *Ministers* very hard on the account of *Subscriptions* and *Declarations* required of them; yet they confess very little is to be said on the behalf of the People, from whom none of those things are required. So that the People are condemned in their Separation, by their own Teachers; but how they can preach lawfully to a People who commit a fault in hearing them, I do not understand.

3. I do not confound bare *suspending Communion* in some particular *Rites*, which persons do modestly scruple, and using it in what they judge to be lawfull; with either *total*, or at least *ordinary forbearance*

Rob. Cœnalis Hist. Gallie. l. 2. p. 126.

Jul. Pollux Onomast. l. 8. c. 9. Schol. in Arist. Acharn. Act. 1. s. 1.

Sacrilegious desertion, p. 35. Separation yet no Schism, p. 59.

of Communion in what they judge to be lawfull; and proceeding to the forming of separate Congregations, i. e. under other Teachers, and by other Rules than what the established Religion allows. And this is the present case of Separation which I intend to consider, and to make the *sinfulness* and *mischief* of it appear.

But that I may do it more convincingly, I will not make the difference wider than it is; but lay down impartially the *state* of the present Controversie between us and our *dissenting Brethren*, about *Communion* with our Churches.

1. They unanimously confess they find no fault with the *Doctrines* of our Church, and can freely subscribe to all the *Doctrinal Articles*; nay they profess *greater zeal for many of them, than, say they, some of our own Preachers do.* Well then! the case is vastly different as to their separation from us, and our separation from the Church of Rome; for we declare, if there were nothing else amiss among them, their *Doctrines* are such as we can never give our assent to.

Peace-of-fering in the name of the Congregational Party; A D 1667. p. 10, 11. Baxter's Defence

of his Cure, p. 64. Separation yet no Schism, p. 6c.

2. \* They generally yield, that our *Parochial Churches* are true Churches; and it is with these their Communion is required. They do not deny that we have all the essentials of true Churches, *true Doctrines, true Sacraments, and an implicit Covenant between Pastors and People.* And some of the most eminent of the Congregational way have declared; that they look upon it as an unjust *Calumny* cast upon them, that they look on our Churches as no true Churches.

\* Discourse concerning Evangelical Love, Church Peace and Unity, 1672. p. 84, 85, 86. See Corbers of Schism, p. 41. Baxter's Defence of his Cure, p. 38.

3. Many of them declare, That they hold *Communion* with our Churches to be lawfull. Yea, we are told in Print by one then present, that A. D. 1663. *divers of their Preachers in London met to consider, how far it was lawfull, or their duty to communicate with the Parish-Churches where they lived, in the Liturgy and Sacraments; and that the Relatour brought in twenty Reasons to prove that it is a duty to some to joyn with some Parish-Churches three times a year in the Lord's Supper; after he had not only proved it lawfull to use a Form of Prayer, and to joyn in the use of our Liturgy, but in the participation of the Sacrament with us; and no one of the Brethren, he adds, seemed to dissent, but to take the Reasons to be valid.* Such another meeting, we are told, they had after the *Plague and Fire*, at which they agreed that *Communion* with our Churches was in it self lawfull and good. Who could have imagined otherwise, than that after the weight of *so many Reasons*, and such a general consent among them, they should have all joyned with us in what themselves judged to be lawfull, and in many cases a duty? But instead of this, we have rather since that time found them more inclinable to courses of separation, filling the people with greater prejudices against our Communion, and gathering them into fixed and separate Congregations; which have proceeded to the choice of new Pastors upon the death of old ones; and except some very few, scarce any, either of their Preachers or People here, come ordinarily to the publick Congregations. And this is that which at present we lament as a thing which unavoidably tends to our common ruin, if not in time prevented; for by this means the hearts of the People are alienated from each other, who apprehend the differences to be much greater than their Teachers will allow, when they are put to declare their minds; and our common enemies take as much

Plea for Peace, p. 240.

much advantage from our differences, as if they were really far greater than they are.

But you may ask, what then are the grounds of the present Separation? for that there is such a thing is discernible by all, but what the reasons of it are is hard to understand after these concessions; yet it is not conceivable that conscientious men can in such a juncture of affairs persist in so obstinate and destructive a course of separation, unless they had something at last fit to answer the *twenty Reasons* of their own Brethren against it?

I have endeavoured to give my self satisfaction in a matter of so great moment to the Peace and Preservation of this Church, and consequently of the Protestant Religion among us; which I never expect to see survive the destruction of the Church of *England*.

And the utmost I can find in the best Writers of the several Parties, amounts to these two things.

1. *That although they are in a state of separation from our Church, yet this separation is no sin.*

2. *That a state of separation would be a sin, but notwithstanding their meeting in different places, yet they are not in a state of separation.*

And herein lies the whole strength of the several *Pleas* at this day made use of to justify the *Separate Congregations*: both which I shall now examine.

Discourse concerning Evangelical Love, Church-Peace and Unity, p. 68.

Baxter's true and only way of Concord, A.D. 1680. p. 111.

1. Some plead, *That it is true they have distinct and separate Communi- ons from us, but it is no sin, or culpable separation so to have. For, say they, our Lord Christ instituted only Congregational Churches, or particular Assemblies for divine Worship, which having the sole Church power in themselves, they are under no obligation of Communion with other Churches, but only to preserve Peace and Charity with them.* And to this Doctrine, others of late approach so near, that they tell us, *That to devise new species of Churches (beyond Parochial or Congregational) without God's Authority, and to impose them on the World (yea in his Name) and call all Dissenters Schismatics, is a far worse usurpation, than to make or impose new Ceremonies or Liturgies.* Which must suppose Congregational Churches to be so much the Institution of Christ, that any other Constitution above these is both unlawfull and insupportable. Which is more than the Independent Brethren themselves do assert.

But to clear the practice of *Separation* from being a sin on this account, two things are necessary to be done.

1. To prove that a Christian hath no obligation to external Communion beyond a Congregational Church.

2. That it is lawfull to break off Communion with other Churches, to set up a particular Independent Church.

Evangelical Love, Sc. p. 49. 52, 54.

1. *That a Christian hath no obligation to external Communion beyond a particular Congregational Church.* They do not deny, *That men by Baptism are admitted into the Catholick visible Church as Members of it; and that there ought to be a sort of Communion by mutual Love among all that belong to this Body: and to do them right, they declare, That they look upon the Church of England, or the Generality of the Nation professing Christianity, to be as sound and healthfull a part of the Catholick Church, as any in the World.* But then they say, *Communion in Ordinances must be only in such Churches as Christ himself instituted by unalterable Rules, which were only particular and Congregational Churches.*

P. 51.

Granting this to be true, how doth it hence appear not to be a sin to separate from our Parochial Churches; which according to their own concessions have all the Essentials of true Churches? And what ground can they have to separate and divide those Churches, which for all that we can see, are of the same nature with the Churches planted by the Apostles at *Corinth, Philippi or Thessalonica*? But I must needs say farther, I have never yet seen any tolerable proof, that the Churches planted by the Apostles were limited to Congregations. It is possible, at first, there might be no more Christians in one City than could meet in one Assembly for Worship, but where doth it appear, that when they multiplied into *more Congregations*, they did make *new and distinct Churches*, under new Officers with a *Separate Power of Government*? Of this, I am well assured, there is no mark or footstep in the New Testament, or the whole History of the Primitive Church. I do not think it will appear credible to any considerate man, that the 5000 Christians in the Church of *Jerusalem* made *one stated and fixed Congregation for divine Worship*; not if we make all the allowances for *strangers* which can be desired: but if this were granted, where are the unalterable Rules that as soon as the company became too great for one *particular Assembly*, they must become a new Church under peculiar Officers and an independent Authority?

It is very strange, that those who contend so much for the Scriptures being a perfect Rule of all things pertaining to Worship and Discipline, should be able to produce nothing in so necessary a Point. If that of which we read the clearest instances in Scripture, must be the standard of all future Ages, much more might be said for limiting Churches to *private Families*, than to *particular Congregations*. For, do we not read of the Church that was in the House of Priscilla and Aquila at Rome; of the Church that was in the House of Nymphas at Colosse; and in the House of Philemon at Laodicea? Why then should not Churches be reduced to particular Families, when by that means they may fully enjoy the Liberty of their Consciences, and avoid the scandal of breaking the Laws? But if, notwithstanding such plain examples, men will extend Churches to Congregations of many Families; why may not others extend Churches to those Societies which consist of many Congregations? Especially considering, that the Apostles when they instituted Churches, did appoint such Officers in them, as had not barely a respect to those already converted, but to as many as by their means should be added to the Church; as *Clemens* affirms in his Epistle; *The Apostles*, saith he, *went about in Cities and Countries Preaching the Gospel; and appointed their First-fruits, having made a spiritual trial of them, for Bishops and Deacons, τῶν μελλόντων πιστεῖν, of those who were to believe.* From hence the number of Converts were looked on as an accession to the Original Church, and were under the care and Government of the Bishop and Presbyters, who were first settled there. For although when the Churches increased, the occasional meetings were frequent in several places; yet still there was but *one Church*, and *one Altar*, and *one Baptistry*, and *one Bishop*, with many *Presbyters* assisting him. And this is so very plain in Antiquity, as to the Churches planted by the Apostles themselves in several parts, that none but a great stranger to the History of the Church can ever call it in question. I am sure *Calvin*, a person of great and deserved reputation among our Brethren, looks upon this as a matter out of dispute among learned men, that a Church

Rom. 16. 3.  
Col. 4. 15.  
Philem. 2.

Clem. Ep. ad Cor. p. 55.

Unicuique civitati erat attributa certa regio, quæ Presbyterat inde sumeret & velut corpori Ecclesie illius accessissetur.

Calvin In-  
st. l. 4. c. 4. n. 2.

did

did not only take in the Christians of a whole City, but of the adjacent Country too : and the contrary opinion is a very novel and late fancy of some among us, and hath not Age enough to plead a Prescription. It is true, after some time in the greater Cities, they had distinct places allotted, and Presbyters fixed among them ; and such allotments were called *Titles* at *Rome*, and *Lauræ* at *Alexandria*, and *Parishes* in other places ; but these were never thought then to be new Churches, or to have any independent Government in themselves ; but were all in subjection to the Bishop and his Colledge of Presbyters, of which multitudes of examples might be brought from most authentick Testimonies of Antiquity ; if a thing so evident needed any proof at all. And yet this distribution even in Cities was so uncommon in those elder times, that *Epiphanius* takes notice of it as an extraordinary thing at *Alexandria* ; and therefore it is probably supposed there was no such thing in all the Cities of *Cyprus* in his time. And if we look over the ancient Canons of the Church, we shall find two things very plain in them ; (1.) That the notion of a Church was the same with that of a Diocese ; or such a number of Christians as were under the inspection of a Bishop. (2.) That those Presbyters who rejected the Authority of their Bishop, or affected *separate meetings*, where no fault could be found with the Doctrine of a Church, were condemned of Schism. So the followers of *Eustathius Sebastenus*, who withdrew from the publick Congregations on pretence of greater sanctity and purity, in *Paphlagonia*, were condemned by the Council at *Gangra* ; so were those who separated from their Bishops, though otherwise never so orthodox, by the Council at *Constantinople*, and the Council at *Carthage* ; wherein before *St. Cyprian* had so justly complained of the Schism of *Felicius* and his Brethren, who on pretence of some disorders in the Church of *Carthage* had withdrawn to the Mountains ; and there laid the Foundation of the *Novatian* Schism. But when false Doctrine was imposed on Churches, as by the *Arian* Bishops at *Antioch*, then the People were excused in their separation ; so at *Rome* when *Felix* was made Bishop ; and at *Sirminum* when *Photinus* published his Hereſie ; but I do not remember one instance in Antiquity, wherein *separation* from *Orthodox Bishops*, and setting up *Meetings* without their authority and against their consent, was acquitted from the sin of *Schism*. Indeed some Bishops have sometimes refused Communion with others upon great misdemeanours ; as *Theognostus* and *St. Martin* with the *Ithacian* party on the account of the death of *Priscillian* ; but this doth not at all reach to the case of Presbyters separating from Bishops, with whom they agree in the same Faith. The followers of *St. Chrysoſtom*, did, I confess, continue their separate Meetings after his Banishment, and the coming in of *Arsacius* : but although they withdrew in his time, being unsatisfied in the manner of his choice ; yet when *Atticus* restored the name of *St. Chrysoſtom* to the *Dptychs* of the Church, they returned to Communion with their Bishop, as *St. Chrysoſtom* himself advised them (as appears by *Palladius*) which is far from justifying the wilfull separation of *Presbyters* and People from the *Communion* of their *Bishops*, when they do agree in the same Faith.

2. But suppose the first Churches were barely *Congregational*, by reason of the small number of Believers at that time, yet *what obligation lies upon us to disturb the Peace of the Church we live in to reduce Churches to their Infant-state ?* They do not think it necessary to reduce the first

Community

Petav. *not*  
in Epiph.  
*her* 69. n.  
1. Canon.  
Nicæn. 6.  
15, 16.  
Const. c. 6.  
Chalced.  
17. 20, 26.  
Antioch.  
c. 2. Codex  
Ecl. Afric.  
c. 53. c. 55.  
Concil.  
Gangr. c. 6.  
Concil.  
Const. c. 6.  
Concil Car-  
thag c. 10,  
11  
Cyprian.  
Ep. 40, 42.  
Theod.  
Ecl. Hist. l.  
1. c. 22 l. 2.  
c. 24. c. 17.  
Vincent.  
c. 16.

Baron. A.  
D. 4c4. n.  
41. 412. n.  
47.

*Community of Goods*, which was far more certainly practised, than Congregational Churches; they do not think it necessary *to wash one ano-* Joh. 13. 14.  
*thers feet*, although Christ did it, and bade his Disciples *do as he did*: they believe that the first Civil Government was appointed by God himself over Families; do they therefore think themselves bound to overthrow Kingdoms to bring things back to their first Institution? If not, why shall the Peace of the Church be in so much worse a condition than that of the Civil State? It is very uncertain whether the Primitive Form were such as they fancy; if it were, it is more uncertain whether it were not so from the circumstances of the times, than from any institution of Christ; but it is most certainly our duty to preserve Peace and Unity among Christians; and it is impossible so to do if men break all Orders in pieces for the fancy they have taken up of a Primitive Platform. It is a great fault among some who pretend to great niceness in some *positive Duties*, that they have so little regard to *comparative Duties*: For that which may be a duty in one case, when it comes to thwart a greater duty, may be none. This Doctrine we learn from Mat. 12. 7. our blessed Saviour in the case of the obligation of the Sabbath; which he makes to yield to duties of Mercy. And can we think that a duty lying upon us, which in our circumstances makes a far greater duty impracticable? Is there any thing Christ and his Apostles have charged more upon the Consciences of all Christians, than studying to preserve Peace and Unity among Christians? This is that *we must follow after*, even Rom. 14. when it seems to fly from us; this is that *we must apply our minds to, and* 19. *think it our honour to promote*; this is that which *the most perfect Christians are the most zealous for*; this is that, for the sake of which we are 1 Theff. 4. 11. commanded to practise *meekness, humility, patience, self-denial and submission to Governours*. And after all this, can we imagine the attaining Phil. 3. 15. 2. 3. Ep. 4. 2, 3. Heb. 13. 17. of such an end should depend upon mens conjectures, whether five thousand Christians in times of persecution could make one Assembly for Worship? Or whether all the Christians in *Ephesus* or *Corinth* made but one Congregation? On what terms can we ever hope for Peace in the Church, if such Notions as these be ground enough to disturb it? What stop can be put to Schisms and Separations, if such pretences as these be sufficient to justify them? Men may please themselves in talking of preserving *Peace and Love* under separate Communion; but our own sad experience shews the contrary; for as nothing tends more to unite mens hearts than joyning together in the same Prayers and Sacraments; so nothing doth more alienate mens affections, than withdrawing from each other into separate Congregations. Which tempts some to spiritual Pride and scorn and contempt of others, as of a more *carnal and worldly Church* than themselves; and provokes others to lay open the follies and indiscretions and immoralities of those who pretend to so much Purity and Spirituality above their Brethren.

II. Others confess, *that to live in a state of separation from such Churches, as many at least of ours are, were a sin*; for they say, *that causeless renouncing Communion with true Churches is Schism, especially if it be joynd with setting up Anti-Churches unwarantably against them*; but this they deny that they do, although they preach when and where it is forbidden by Law; and worship God, and administer Sacraments by other Rules, and after a different manner than what our Church requires. This is not dealing with us with that fairness and ingenuity which our former

True way of Concord, Part 3. c. 1. Sect. 40.

Brethren used; for they avow the fact of *separation*, but deny it to be sinfull; these owning it to be sinfull, have no other refuge left but to deny the fact, which is evident to all Persons. For do they not do the very same things and in the same manner, that the others do; how comes it then to be *separation* in some and not in others? They are very unwilling to confesse a *separation*, because they have formerly condemned it with great severity; and yet they do the same things for which they charged others as guilty of a *sinfull separation*.

For, the *Assembly of Divines* urged their *dissenting Brethren* to comply with their *Rules of Church Government*, and charged them with *Schism* if they did it not; whereas they only desired to enjoy such liberty as to their *separate Congregations*, as is now pleaded for by our *dissenting Brethren*. This, say they, would give countenance to a perpetual *Schism and Division in the Church*, still drawing away some from the Churches under the Rule, which also would breed irritations between the Parties; and would introduce all manner of *Confusion*. And they thought it a very unreasonable thing for them to desire *distinct and separate Congregations*, as to those parts of worship where they could joyn in *Communion with them*: and they thought no person was to be indulged as to any *Error or Scruple of Conscience*; but with this Proviso, that in all other parts of worship they joyn with the *Congregation wherein they live*; and be under the Government to be established. To this the dissenting Brethren answered, that such a variation, or forbearance, could neither be a *Schism*, nor endanger it; and that the great cause of *Schism* hath been a strict obligation of all to *Uniformity*; that as long as in their separate *Congregations* they did practise most of the same things, and the most substantial in their Rule, it could not be called a total separation, especially considering, that they professed their Churches to be true Churches; and that they had occasional *Communion with them*, which is the very same Plea made use of at this day among us. To which the *Assemblies Party* smartly replied, That since they acknowledged their Churches to be so true, that they could occasionally joyn in all Acts of worship, they conceived they were bound to act with them in joint *Communion by one common Rule*, and not by different Rules and in separated *Congregations*. And they add, that to leave all ordinary *Communion in any Church with dislike*, when opposition or offence offers it self, is to separate from such a Church in the *Scripture sense*; such separation was not in being in the *Apostles times*, unless it were used by false Teachers; all who professed *Christianity* held *Communion together*, as in one Church, notwithstanding differences of *Judgment*, or corruptions in *Practice*; and that, if they can hold occasional *Communion without sin*, they know no reason why it may not be ordinary without sin too, and then separation would be needless. To which they subjoyn these remarkable words, which I heartily with our Brethren at this day would think seriously upon, *To separate from those Churches ordinarily and visibly with whom occasionally you may joyn with without sin*, seemeth to be a most unjust separation. So that whatever false colours and pretences some men make use of to justify their present practice, if the judgment of their own Brethren may be taken upon the most weighty debate, and the most serious deliberation, it is no better than plain and down-right *separation*. And I must needs say, I never saw any Cause more weakly defended, no, not that of *Polygamy* and *Anabaptism*, than that of those, who allow it to be lawfull to joyn in *Communion with us*, and yet go about to vindicate the *separate Meetings* among us, from the guilt of a *sinfull separation*. For altho' they

Papers for  
accommoda-  
tion,  
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1648.p.16.  
p. 20, 21.

P. 22.

P. 25.

P. 28, 29,  
30.

P. 47.

P. 55.

P. 56.



they allow *our Churches to be true, and that it is lawfull to communicate with them*, which is the most plausible Plea they have, this is so far from extenuating, that it doth aggravate the fault; for as the Brethren of the Assembly said, *Though they do not pronounce an affirmative Judgment against us; yet the very separating is a tacit and practical condemning of our Churches, if not as false, yet as impure.*

P. 71.

But whatever may be said as to other Pleas for their present practices, my Text seems to afford the strongest of all, *viz.* that men are to be pressed to go no farther than *they have already attained*, and not to be strained up to an *uniformity* beyond the dictates of their Consciences, but to be let alone, as the Apostle directs in the foregoing verse, *If any one be otherwise minded, he must be left to God*, and that manifestation of his Will, which he will be pleased to give him.

The clearing of this will give a full answer to the second enquiry, *viz.*

2. *What is to be done, if men cannot come up to the Rule prescribed.*

To this therefore I answer in these particulars.

1. *This can never justifie men in not doing what they lawfully may do.* For this Rule of the Apostle makes Communion necessary, as far as it is lawfull; and that upon the account of the general obligation lying upon all Christians to do what in them lies for preservation of the Peace of the Church. *Therefore as far as ye have attained walk by the same Rule, do the same Things*; which words, saith *Cajetan*, the Apostle subjoins to the former, lest the persons he there speaks to should think themselves excused from going as far as they can as to the same Rule: Which plainly shews that men are bound in Conscience to go as far as they can; and I cannot see how it is consistent with that *tenderness of Conscience* which our Brethren pretend to, for so many of them to live so many years in a neglect of that Communion with our Church, which themselves judge to be lawfull.

I dare say, if most of the Preachers at this day in the *separate Meetings* were soberly asked their judgments, whether it were lawfull for the People to join with us in the publick Assemblies, they would not deny it; and yet the People that frequent them, generally judge otherwise. For it is not to be supposed, that faction among them should so commonly prevail beyond interest; and therefore if they thought it were lawfull for them to comply with the Laws, they would do it. But why then is this kept up as such a mighty secret in the breasts of their Teachers? Why do they not preach it to them in their Congregations? Is it for fear, they should have none left to preach to? that is not to be imagined of mortified and conscientious men. Is it lest they should seem to condemn themselves, while they preach against *Separation* in a *Separate Congregation*?

This, I confess, looks oddly, and the tenderness of a man's mind in such a case, may out of meer shamefacedness keep him from declaring a Truth which lies in his face, while he speaks it.

Is it that they fear the reproaches of the People? which some few of the most eminent Persons among them, have found they must undergo if they touch upon this Subject (for I know not how it comes to pass, that the most *Godly People* among them, can the least endure to be told of their faults.) But is it not as plainly written by *St. Paul*, Gal. 1. 10. *If I yet please men I should not be the Servant of Christ; as Woe be unto me if I Preach not the Gospel?* If they therefore would acquit themselves like honest and conscientious men, let them tell the People plainly

that they look on our Churches as true Churches, and that they may lawfully communicate with us in Prayers and Sacraments; and I do not question but in time, if they find it lawful, they will judge it to be their Duty. For it is the Apostles command here, *Whereto we have already attained let us walk by the same Rule, let us mind the same Things.*

2. If the bare dissatisfaction of mens Consciences do justifie the lawfulness of Separation, and breaking an established Rule, it were to little purpose to make any Rule at all. Because it is impossible to make any, which ignorant and injudicious men shall not apprehend to be in some thing or other against the Dictates of their Consciences. But because what we say may not weigh so much with them in this matter, as what was said on this Occasion by their own Brethren in the Assembly, I shall give an account of their Judgment in this matter.

The dissenting Brethren were not so much wanting to their Cause, as not to plead tenderness of Conscience with as much advantage and earnestness as any men now can do it. To which they answer,

Papers for  
Accom-  
modation,  
p. 51. V.  
p. 61.

1. That though tenderness of Conscience may justifie Non-communion in the thing scrupled, yet it can never justifie Separation.

We much doubt, say they, whether such tenderness of Conscience, as ariseth out of an opinion, cui potest subesse falsum, (which may be false) when the Conscience is so tender, that it may be withall an erring Conscience, can be a sufficient ground to justifie such a material Separation, as our Brethren plead for; For though it may bind, to forbear or suspend the Act of Communion in that particular, wherein men conceive they cannot hold Communion without sin (nothing being to be done contrary unto Conscience) yet it doth not bind to follow such a positive prescript as possibly may be divers from the Will and Counsel of God, of which kind we conceive this of gathering Separated Churches out of other true Churches to be one.

p. 66.

2. That it is endless to hope to give satisfaction to erring Consciences. The Grounds, say they, upon which this Separation is desired, are such upon which all other possible scruples which erring Consciences may in any other cases be subject unto, may claim the privilege of a like Indulgence. And so this Toleration being the first, shall indeed but lay the foundation and open the gap, wherewith as many divisions in the Church, as there may be scruples in the minds of men, shall upon the self-same equity be let in. And again, that this will make way for infinite divisions and sub-divisions; and give countenance to a perpetual Schism, and Division in the Church.

p. 68.

p. 73.

p. 68.

p. 73.

3. That scruple of Conscience is no protection against Schism; no cause of Separating; nor doth it take off causeless Separation from being Schism, which may arise from Errors of Conscience as well as carnal and corrupt Reasons; and therefore they conceive the causes of Separation must be shewn to be such as ex natura rei will bear it out.

p. 111.

4. That the Apostle notwithstanding the difference of mens Judgments did prescribe Rules of Uniformity. For, say they, they suppressed the contentions of men by the custom of the Churches of God, I Cor. 11. 16. and ordain the same practice in all the Churches, notwithstanding our Brethrens distinction of difference of light, I Cor. 7. 17. And did not the Apostles bind the burthen of some necessary things on the Churches, albeit there were in those Churches gradual differences of light?

p. 113, 114

5. That the Apostle by this Rule in the Text, did not intend to allow Brethren who agree in all substantials of Faith and Worship, to separate from one another, in those very substantials wherein they agree. Is this, say they, to walk by the same Rule, and to mind the same Things, to separate from Churches

Churches in those very things wherein we agree with them? We desire no more of them than we are confident was practised by the Saints at Philippi, namely, to hold practical Communion in things wherein they doctrinally agree. P. 115.

6. That there is a great deal of difference between Tyranny over mens Consciences, and Rules of Uniformity. For the dissenting Brethren charged the Assembly, with setting up an Uniformity for Uniformity's sake, i. e. affecting Uniformity so much, as not to regard mens Consciences; and without respect had to the varieties of Light in matters of a lesser nature; which, say they, will prove a perfect tyranny, and it is in effect to stretch a low man to the same length with a taller, or to cut a tall man to the stature of one that is low, for Uniformity's sake. To which the others answer, That they do not desire Uniformity for the sake of Tyranny, but only for Order, and Order for Edification. But for ought they could perceive, any thing that is One must be judged the foundation of Tyranny (which are their own words.) P. 116.  
 As to variety of light, they desired their Brethren to answer them in this one thing, whether some must be denied liberty of their Conscience in matter of practice, or none? If none, then, say they, we must renounce our Covenant and let in Prelacy again; and all others ways; if a denial of liberty unto some may be just, then Uniformity may be settled notwithstanding variety of lights, without any Tyranny at all. P. 117.  
 As to their similitude, they grant it to be pretty and plausible, but such arguments are popular and inartificial, having more of flourish than substance in them. For did not they endeavour to raise lower Churches to a greater height? would they permit other Church-Governments if it were in their power, because men must not for Uniformity's sake be pared or stretched to the measure of other men? would they endure the lower suckers at the root of their tree to grow till they had killed the tree it self? Ad populum phaleras.

From whence we see the Church of England's endeavour after Uniformity, is acquitted from Tyranny over the Consciences of men by the Judgment of the most learned of the Assembly of Divines? for such we do not question they chose to manage this debate, upon which the turn of their whole affairs depended.

3. A wilful Error or mistake of Conscience doth by no means excuse from sin. Thus if a man think himself bound to divide the Church by a sinful Separation; that Separation is nevertheless a sin for his thinking himself bound to do it. For S. Paul thought himself bound to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth, yet he calls himself a blasphemer and the greatest of sinners, for what he did under that obligation of Conscience. The Jews thought themselves bound in Conscience to do God service, but it was a horrible mistake, when they took killing the Apostles to be any part of it. From whence it appears, that men may do very bad things, and yet think themselves bound in Conscience to do them. I do not hence infer that the pretence of Conscience is not to be regarded, because it may be abused to so ill purposes; for no man that hath any Conscience will speak against the Power of it, and he that declares against it, hath no reason to be regarded in what he saith. But that which ought to be inferred from hence, is, that men ought not to rest satisfied with the present dictates of their Consciences, for notwithstanding them, they may commit very great sins. I am afraid, the common mistating the Case of an Erroneous Conscience hath done a great deal of Mischief to conscientious men, and betray'd them into great security, while they are assured they do act according to their Consciences.

For

For the *question* is generally put, *How far an Erroneous Conscience doth oblige?* And when men hear that they must *not act against their Consciences though they be mistaken*, they think themselves safe enough and enquire no farther. But if they would consider, that no man's *Conscience* alters the nature of *Good* and *Evil* in things; that what *God* hath made a *Duty* or a *Sin* remains so, whatever a man's *Conscience* doth judge concerning them; that no man's *Conscience* can strictly oblige him either to *omit a Duty*, or to *commit a Sin*; the utmost *Resolution* of the Case comes to this, That a man may be so perplexed and entangled by an *Erroneous Conscience*, that he may be under a necessity of sinning, if he acts either with or against it. Not that *God* ever puts a man under the necessity of sinning, (for then it would be no sin to him, if it were unavoidable) but that by their own neglect and carelessness, without looking after due information, and running on with violent *Prejudices*, which was the case of *S. Paul* and the *Jews* (and I wish it were not of many Christians) they may make false and rash *judgments* of things, and so *sin* either in doing or not doing what their *Consciences* tell them they are bound to do.

The most material Question then, in the case of an *Erroneous Conscience*, is, What *Error of Conscience* doth excuse a man from *Sin* in following the *Dictates* of it? For, if the *Error* be wholly *involuntary*; *i. e.* if it be caused by *invincible Ignorance*, or after using the *best means* for due information of his *Conscience*, though the *Act* may be a fault in it self, yet it shall not be imputed to him as a *Sin*; because it wanted the *consent* of the *Mind*, by which the *Will* is determined; but if men fall into *Wilfull Errors of Conscience*; *i. e.* if they form their *Judgments* rather by *Prejudice* and *Passion* and *Interest* than from the *Laws* of *God* or just *Rules of Conscience*; if they do not examine things fairly on both sides, praying for divine direction; if they have not patience to hear any thing against their opinion, but run on blindly and furiously, they may in so doing *act* according to their *Consciences*, and yet they may be in as great danger of committing heinous sins as *St. Paul* and the *Jews* were. Thus if men through the *Power* of an *Erroneous Conscience* may think themselves bound to make *Schisms* and *Divisions* in the *Church*, to disobey *Laws*, and to break in pieces the *Communion* of that *Church*, which they are, or ought to be members of, they may satisfy themselves that they pursue their *Consciences*, and yet for want of due care of informing themselves and judging aright, those very *Actions* may be *Wilfull* and *Damnablen Sins*.

Nothing now remains but to make *Application* of what hath been said to our own Case. And that shall be to two sorts of Persons, 1. To those who *continue* in the *Communion* of our *Church*. 2. To those who *dissent* from it.

I. To those who *continue* in the *Communion* of our *Church*. *Let us walk by the same Rule, and mind the same Things.* Let us study the *Unity* and *Peace*, and thereby the *Honour* and *Safety* of it. While we keep to *one Rule*, all People know what it is to be of our *Church*; if men set up their own fancies above the *Rule*, they charge it with imperfection; if they do not obey the *Rule*, they make themselves wiser than those that made it. It hath not been either the *Doctrine* or *Rules* of our *Church* which have ever given advantage to the *Enemies* of it; but the *indiscretion* of some in going beyond them, and the *inconstancy* of others in not holding to them. Such

Such is the *Purity* of its *Doctrine*, such the *Loyalty* of its *Principles*, such the *Wisdom*, and *Order*, and *Piety* of its *Devotions*, that none who are true Friends to any of these, can be Enemies to it. Let us take heed we do not give too much occasion to our Enemies to think the worse of our *Church* for our sakes. It is easie to observe, that most quarrels relating to *Constitutions* and *Frames* of *Government* are more against *Persons* than *Things*; when they are unsatisfied with their management, then they blame the *Government*; but if themselves were in place, or those they love and esteem, then the *Government* is a good thing, if it be in good mens hands. Thus do mens judgments vary as their interests do.

And so as to *Churches*, we find *Uniformity* and *Order* condemned as *Tyrannical*, till men come into *Power* themselves, and then the very same things and arguments are used and thought very good and substantial, which before were weak and sophistical. Those who speak now most against the *Magistrates Power* in matters of *Religion* had *ten substantial Reasons* for it, when they thought the *Magistrate* on their own side. Those who now plead for *Toleration*, did once think it the *Mother of Confusion*, the *Nurse of Atheism*, the *Inlet of Popery*, the *common Sink* of all *Errors* and *Heresies*. But, if there be not much to be said against the *Churches Constitution*, then they are ready to lay load upon the *Persons* of the *Governors* and *Members* of it; and thence pretend to a necessity of *Separation* for a *purser Communion*. Let us endeavour to remove this objection, not by recrimination (which is too easie in such cases) but by living suitably to our holy Religion, by reforming our own lives, and redressing (what in us lies) the *Scandals* and *Disorders* of others. Let us by the innocency and unblameableness of our lives, the life and constancy of our devotions, the meekness and gentleness of our behaviour in our own Cause, our Zeal and Courage in God's, add a lustre to our Religion, and bring others to a *Love* of our *Church*.

Anf. to 2  
Questions.  
1659.

II. To those who *dissent* from our *Communion*. *Whether they bear, or whether they will forbear*, I cannot dismiss this subject, without offering some things to them.

1. By way of *Consideration*.

2. By way of *Advice*.

(I.) I shall offer these things to their *Consideration*.

1. Let them consider *How many things must be born with in the Constitution of a Church*; which cannot be expected in this World to be *without Spot or Wrinkle*. And if men will set themselves only to find faults, it is impossible in this state of things, they should ever be pleased. And if they *separate where they see any thing amiss*, they must follow his example, who pursued this *Principle* so far, till he withdrew from all *Society*, lest he should communicate with them in their Sin; in which condition he continued till his Children lay dead in the house, and he became utterly unable to help himself; and because *no humane inventions were to be allowed about the Worship of God*, he had cut out of his Bible the *Contents of the Chapters*, and *Titles of the Leaves*, and so left the *bare Text*, without *Binding* or *Covers*. This is the Case the rigid and impracticable Principles of some would bring our *Churches* to, by cutting off all *Rules* of *Order* and *Decency*, as encroachments on the *Institutions* of Christ.

They that are ruled must consider, that the best Policy or Constitution, so far as it is of man's regulating, hath defects and inconveniences, and affairs will be complicated; and therefore they must not be too unyielding, but bear with what is tolerable, and not easily remediable. Corbet of the found State of Religion, p 75-1679.

Ball against Can. p. 13:

A discourse of the Religion of England in its due Latitude, Sect. 19.

2. I desire them to consider *how impossible it is to give satisfaction to all, and how many things must be allowed a favourable interpretation in publick Constitutions and general Laws*; which it is hardly possible so to frame, but there will be room left for Cavils and Exceptions. Yea, *when the wisest and best men have done their utmost*, some of themselves confess, *there may be dissatisfaction still*; and if *Christian Humility, Charity and Discretion, will then advise persons to acquiesce in their private security and freedom, and not to unsettle the publick Order for their private satisfaction*: Why should not men practise the same vertues themselves; which they do confess, will be necessary for *some* at last?

Such is the complicated condition of humane affairs, that it is exceeding difficult to devise a Rule or Model that shall provide for all whom Equity will plead for. Therefore the prudent and sober will acquiesce in any Constitution that is in some good sort proportionable to the ends of Government. *A Discourse of the Religion of England, &c. S. 14. Printed 1667.*

Wife and good men will consider the difficulties that always attend publick Establishments; and have that esteem for *Peace and Order*, that they will bear with any thing tolerable for the sake of it. It is a very hard case with a Church when men shall set their *Wits* to strain every thing to the worst sense, to stretch Laws beyond the intention and design of them, to gather together all the doubtful and obscure passages in *Calenders, Translations, &c.* and will not distinguish between their approbation of the use and of the choice of things. If upon such terms as these men think to justify the present

See Baxter's Cure of Divisions. p. 264. Eph. 4. 2, 3.

*Divisions*, I much question, whether if they proceed in such a manner, they can hold *Communion* with any Church in the *Christian World*. If men be disposed to find faults, no Church can be *pure* enough; for something will be amiss either in *Doctrine*, or *Discipline*, or *Ceremonies*, or *Manners*; but if they be disposed to *Peace and Union*, then *Charity will cover a multitude of failings*; and then according to St. Paul's advice, *with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in Love, they will be endeavouring to preserve the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*. And without the practice of the former Vertues, no *Metaphysical Discourses of Unity*, will signify any thing to the Churches *Peace*.

Papers of accommodation, p. 52. Ballagaine's Can. Pref. p. 2.

3. They would do well to consider, *How Separation of the People from our Churches comes to be more lawful now, than in the days of our Fathers*. It hath been often and evidently proved, that the most sober and learned *Non-conformists* of former times, *notwithstanding their scruples in some points, yet utterly condemned Separation from our Churches as unlawful*. And they looked upon this, not as a mere common sin of humane infirmity, but as a wilfull and dangerous sin; *in that it is so far from tending to the overthrow of Antichrist, that it upholds and maintains him*; calling it *a renting the Church, the disgrace of Religion, the advancement of Pride, Schism and Contention, the offence of the Weak, the grief of the Godly, who be better settled, the hardning of the Wicked, and the recovery or rising again of Antichristianism; nay, even persecuting the Lord Jesus in his Host, which they revile; in his Ordinances, which they dishonour; and in his Servants, whose footsteps they slander, whose Graces they despise, whose Office they trample upon with disdain*. These are the very words of one of the most learned and judicious *Non-conformists* before the Wars. And surely the mischiefs that followed after, could not make *Separation* to appear less odious. Was it a sin? was it such a sin then? and is it none now? Either our *Brethren* at this day, do believe it to be a *Sin* for the *People* to *separate*, or they do not: If not, it must either be, that there are new and harder terms of *Communion*, which were not then; which

which is far from being true, that they confes them to be rather easier for the People : or it must be, that they are gone off from the peaceable Principles of their Predecessors, which they are unwilling to own. If they do believe it to be a *Sin*, why do they suffer the People to live in a known *Sin*? Why do they encourage them by *Preaching in separate Congregations*? For their Predecessors did not think it lawfull, much less a *Duty*, to preach when forbidden by a Law : *neither did they understand what warrant any ordinary Minister hath in such a case by Gods word, so to draw any Church or People to his private Ministry in opposition to the Laws and Government he lived under.* They understood the difference between the Apostles cases and theirs ; and never thought the Apostles, *Woe be unto me if I preach not the Gospel, did extend to them ; but thought that silenced Ministers ought to live as private Members of the Church till they were restored, and the People bound to hear others.* Of which there can be far less ground to dispute, when themselves acknowledge the *Doctrine* by Law established to be true and sound.

*Bradshaw against Johnson, S. 40, 91. Gouges whole Ar-mour of God, p. 570.*

4. Lastly, Let me beseech them to consider *the common danger that threatens us all by means of our Divisions.* We have Adversaries subtle and industrious enough to make use of all advantages to serve their own ends ; and there is scarce any other they promise themselves more from, than the continuance of these breaches among our selves : This some of our Brethren themselves have been aware of ; and on that account have told the People of the danger of the *Principles of Separation*, as to the interest of Religion in general, and the *Protestant Religion* in particular among us.

*Nothing that I know of in the world, doth so strongly tempt*

some sober conscientious men to think Popery necessary for the Concord of Churches, and a violent Church-Government necessary to our Peace, as the wofull experience of the Errors and Schisms, the mad and manifold Sects that arise among those that are most against them. *Baxter's last Answer to Bagshaw, p. 30.*

You little know what a pernicious design the Devil hath upon you, in perswading you to desire and endeavour to pull down the interest of Christ and Religion, which is upheld in the Parish Churches of this Land : and to think that it is best to bring them as low in reality, or reputation as you can, and to contract the religious Interest all into private Meetings, *Id. p. 31. n. 25.*

Certainly, Nothing would tend more to our common security than for all true and sincere Protestants to lay aside their prejudices, and mistakes, and to joyn heartily in *Communion* with us: which many of their Teachers at this day allow to be lawfull. And how can they satisfie themselves in hazarding our Religion by not doing that, which themselves confes lawfull to be done?

(2.) But if we are not yet ripe for so great a mercy as a perfect Union, yet I would intreat our Brethren to make way for it by hearkening to these following *Advices.*

1. *Not to give encouragement to rash and intemperate zeal ;* which rends all in pieces, and makes reconciliation impossible. Those who see least into things, are usually the fiercest contenders about them : and such eager Disputants are fitter to make quarrels than to end them ; for they can be contentious for *Peace-sake*, and make new differences about the ways of *Unity.* Wisdom and sobriety, a good judgment, a prudent temper, and freedom from prejudice will tend more to end our differences, than warm Debates, and long Disputations ; which as *Greg. Nazianzen* said once of Councils, *seldom have had any good end.* But there is a more fiery sort of zeal, and more dangerous than this ; which may lie smothering for a time, till it meets with suitable matter and a freer vent, and then it breaks out into a dreadful flame. This we have already seen such dismal effects of in this age, that we should think

there were less need to give men caution against it again, were it not to be feared, that where Reason cannot prevail, Experience will not. All that we can say to such persons that may be like to move them, is, that if their *blind zeal* transport them, as it did *Sampson*, to pull down the *House* over their *Heads*, they will be sure to perish themselves in the fall of it; but here will lie the great difference of the case, while they and their friends perish together, the *Philistins* without will rejoyce to to make others the instruments to execute their designs.

2. *Not to be always complaining of their hardships and persecutions*; as though no People had suffer'd so much since the days of *Dioclesian*; whereas the severity of the Laws hath been temper'd with so much gentleness in the execution of them, that others have as much complained of *Indulgence*, as they of *Persecution*. It doth not look like the *Patience*, and *Humility*, and *Meekness* of the *Primitive Christians*, to make such noise and outcries of their suffering so much, when they would have been rather thankfull that they suffered no more. Is this the way to *Peace*, to represent their case still to the world in an exasperating and provoking manner? Is this the way to incline their *Governours* to more *condescension*, to represent them to the *People* as an *Ithacian persecuting Party*? Where are the *Priscillians* that have been put to death by their instigation? What do such insinuations mean, but that our *Bishops* are the followers of *Ithacius* and *Idacius* in their *cruelty*; and they of the good and meek Bishop *S. Martin*, who refused *Communion* with them on that account? If men do entertain such kind thoughts of themselves, and such hard thoughts of their *Superiours*, whatever they plead for, they have no inclination to *Peace*.

3. *Not to condemn others for that which themselves have practised, and think to be lawfull in their own cases*. What outcries have some made against the *Church of England*, as *Cruel* and *Tyrannical*, for expecting and requiring *Uniformity*? And yet do not such men, even at this day, contend for the *Obligation* of a *Covenant*, which binds men to endeavour after *Uniformity in Doctrine, Discipline and Worship*? But they want the ingenuity of *Adonibezek*, to reflect on the *Thumbs and the Toes, which they have cut off from others*; and think themselves bound to do it again, if it were in their power. Who could have been thought more moderate in this way, than those who went upon the principles of the *dissenting Brethren*? and yet we are assured, that even in *New-England*, when their own *Church-way* was by *Law* established among them, they made it no less than *Banishment* for the *Anabaptists* to set up other *Churches* among them, or for any secretly to seduce others from the approbation and use of *Infant-Baptism*. And how they have since proceeded with the *Quakers*, is very well known. Nay, even these, notwithstanding the single *Independency* of every man's *light within him*, have found it necessary to make *Rules and Orders* among themselves to govern their *Societies*; to which they expect an *uniform Obedience*; and allow no *Liberty out of the Power and Truth*; as they love to speak. From all which it appears, the true Controversie is not about the *Reasonableness* of *Uniformity*; but who shall have the *Power* of prescribing the *Rules* of it. Is it not now a very hard case, that the *Church of England* must be loaded with bitter reproaches, and exposed to the common hatred of all *Parties* for the sake of that; which every one of them would practise if it were in their *Power*; and think it very justifiable so to do?

Judg. 1.7.

See Clark's Narrative of New-England's Persecution, A. D. 1651.

See Spirit of the Hat, p. 12, &c.



4. *Not to inflame the Peoples heats, by making their differences with the Church of England to appear to be greater than they are.* Let them deal honestly and faithfully with them, by letting them understand that they look on our Churches as true Churches, and occasional Communion at least with them to be lawfull: (and it is hard to understand, if occasional Communion be lawfull, that constant Communion should not be a Duty.) This were the way to abate mens great prejudices, and to soften their Spirits, and to prepare them for a closer Union. But if instead of this, they endeavour to darken and confound things, and cast mists before their eyes, that they cannot see their way clear before them; all understanding men will conclude, they prefer some little interests of their own, before the honour of *Christ* and the *Peace* of his Church.

5. *Not to harbour or foment unreasonable jealousies and suspicions in Peoples minds concerning us.* This hath been one of the most successfull arts of keeping up the distance and prejudices that have been so great among us, viz. by private whispers, by false suggestions, by idle stories, by unreasonable interpretation of words beyond the intention and design of those who spake them. By such devices as these, great mischief hath been done among us, and I am much afraid, is doing still. For nothing sets men at a greater distance from our Church, than the apprehending that we are not hearty and sincere in the Protestant Cause: which although it be a most groundless and malicious calumny, yet there have been some, who have had so little regard to Conscience, or common Ingenuity, as not only to charge particular Persons, but our Church it self with *Marching towards Popery*. What injustice, what uncharitableness, what impudence is it, to fasten such an imputation upon a Church that hath hitherto continued (and long may it do so) the chief Bulwark of the Protestant Cause? Little do such Persons consider, how much they serve the design of our enemies, who cannot but be mightily pleased to find their most formidable adversaries represented to the People as their secret Friends.

6. *Not to run the hazard of all for a shew of greater Liberty to themselves.* For under this pretence our Adversaries endeavour to make them their Instruments to bring upon our Necks a Yoke which neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear. An universal Toleration is that Trojan Horse, which brings in our enemies without being seen, and which after a long Siege they hope to bring in at last under the pretence of setting our Gates wide enough open, to let in all our friends.

And then think with your selves what advantages they will have above others; considering some mens coldness and indifferency in Religion; others uncertainty and running from one extreme to another; others easiness in being drawn away by the hopes and fears of this world; which have a wonderfull influence upon changing mens opinions, even when they do not think it themselves. So that those seem very little to understand mankind, who do not apprehend the dangerous consequences of a general Toleration.

Those who pretend there is no danger, because by this means the Folly of their Religion will be exposed, do not consider what a catching disease folly is; and how natural it is for men that are fancifull in Religion to exchange one folly for another. If all men were wise and sober in Religion, there would need no Toleration; if they are not, we must suppose, if they had what they wished, they would do as might be expected from men wanting Wisdom and Sobriety, i. e. All the feveral

veral Parties would be striving and contending with each other, which should be uppermost, and gain the greatest interest.

And what would the fruit of all such contentions be, but endless disputes, and exposing the follies of one another, till at last *Religion* itself be sunk into the greatest contempt; or men, through mere weariness of contending, be willing even to submit to *Papal Tyranny*, because it pretends to some kind of *Unity*?

And verily you will keep up the Papists hope, that by an universal Toleration, they may at last come in on equal terms with you, or by connivence, be endured as much as you. And if they be equal in *England* with you, their transmarine advantages will make them more than equal, notwithstanding their disadvantages in their Cause, and their contrariety to Kingly Interest. *Baxter's last Answer to Bagshaw*, p. 31.

So that, upon the whole matter, if we would consult the *Honour of God and Religion*, the *Peace and Tranquillity* of the *Church* we live in; if we would prevent the great *Designs* of our enemies, and leave the *Protestant Religion* here established to *Posterity*, we ought to follow the *Apostle's advice*, in walking by the same Rule, and in minding the same Things.

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OF

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O F  
Protestant Charity,  
IN A  
SERMON

Preached at

S<sup>t</sup> Sepulchres Church;

On *Tuesday*

In Easter Week,

In the Year, MDCLXXXI.

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OF

Practical Chemistry

IN A

SERIES OF

LECTURES

delivered at the

University of

London

BY

ROBERT B. HARRISON, F.R.S.

T O

The Right Honourable

Sir Patience VVard,

Lord Mayor of the City of *London*.

A N D T O

The Court of ALDERMEN.

My Lord, and Gentlemen,

**I***T is the great Honour of this City, since the Protestant Religion was professed in it, that it hath born a much greater proportion to the rest of the Nation, in publick VVorks of Charity, than in the largeness of its Buildings, and number of its Inhabitants, For when, upon the unreasonable clamours of our Adversaries of the Church of Rome, an account was thought fit to be taken of such Acts of Charity as lay more open to the view of the World, within sixty years from the settlement of the Reformation by Q. Elizabeth, it was found, that they exceeded all that had been done in twice that number of years in the time of Popery; and that therein this City did equal the whole Kingdom besides. And although those who make this Report, complain of the too great reservedness of some Companies in making known their Benefactors; yet upon the diligent search some persons made, it did appear, that as to the best parts of publick Charity in founding Schools and Hospitals, &c. more was done within that time, than from the Conquest to the Reformation.*

Dr. Wil-  
ler's Sy-  
nopf. P<sup>is</sup>  
pifmi,  
p. 1219.  
1224.

*For, besides the large and constant Charity of the City in the Care of their Hospitals; many particular Citizens did so great things in several parts of the Nation upon their own Stocks, that within that compass of Time, more than forty Hospitals were built and endowed, and above twenty Free Schools, and upon a reasonable computation, near a million of Money was thought to be bestowed in Works of Charity, in London and the two Universities.*

*This*

*This was the true Protestant Charity of those times ; which ran in a clear, free and undivided Channel, without the mixture of Superstition, or being diverted from its proper course to serve private ends and designs. And this brought Honour to our Religion ; advanced the Reputation of the City ; and promoted the Good of the whole Nation. And such are great and wise ends ; fit to be considered and carried on by those to whom God hath given a heart suitable to the largeness of their Estates ; which they can neither carry into another World, nor better employ in this than by doing Good to Mankind with them.*

*And as there still continued many and undeniable Instances among true Protestants of extraordinary designs of Charity by particular Members of this City, whom God had blessed in their Employments ; so I have reason to hope, that this Age will afford remarkable Examples of the same kind to Posterity : That so our Protestant Faith may be always found fruitfull in good VWorks ; which will be the best means both to adorn and preserve it.*

*To perswade and encourage others to tread in the steps of those worthy Citizens whose Faith and Charity deserve their imitation, is the chief design of the following Sermon ; which out of due Respect to the Order of your Court, I now present to your Hands ; with my hearty Prayers to Almighty God for the continuance of his Blessing on this City and the Government of it. I am,*

My Lord, and Gentlemen,

Your most Faithful and Obedient Servant,

*Edward Stillingfleet.*

S E R-

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# SERMON XIX.

O F

## Protestant Charity,

Preached at

### S<sup>t</sup>. Sepulchres Church,

O N

Tuesday in Easter-Week, 1681.

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GAL. VI. 9.

*And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

**W**hen Julian the Apostate designed (if possible) to retrieve the Sozom. 1. 5. c. 15. honour of the Heathen Religion, he easily discern'd that it was not enough for him to restore the Priesthood, to open Hist. Trip. l. 6. c. 29. the Temples, to appoint the Sacrifices to be offer'd upon the Altars; but he found it necessary for them to imitate the Christians in the strictness of their Lives, in the solemnity of their Devotions, in the exactness of their Discipline, and especially in the erecting Hospitals and taking care of the Poor. For he that would not believe the Christian Religion to be from God, thought himself bound to give some probable account, how a Religion so contrary to the Interests and Designs of this World, should be able to prevail against all the arts and power of its many and potent Enemies; and upon the deepest search which could be made by himself, or the greatest Wits of the Heathens then about him, they concluded the flourishing and propagation of it to be chiefly owing to those things which he so much commended to the Heathens imitation. And from hence they inferred, that if the same things could be brought into practice among the Gentiles, they should be able to supplant Christianity by its own methods, and restore Paganism by the same Weapons by which it was overthrown. This was thought so subtle and artificial a device by him whose great design was to extirpate our Religion in a soft and gentle manner, without the blood and cruelty of former times, that he writes an Epistle on purpose to *Arsacius* the chief

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Priest

Priest of *Galatia*, requiring punctual observance of these Commands; and as to the chargeable and expensive part, he offer'd large provisions out of his own Revenue to defray it.

But Saint Paul had been beforehand with him in *Galatia*, having planted Churches with great success there; and Christianity, by his means, took so deep root in mens hearts, that neither the rage and fury of former persecutions, nor the plausible arts and insinuations of *Julian* were able to root it out. It is true, that these Churches, soon after their planting, were in great danger of being over-run by the pernicious Errors of some Seducers of that time; (the apprehension whereof put St. Paul into that astonishment which he expresseth in the beginning of this Epistle, *I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the Grace of Christ unto another Gospel, &c.*) yet by the early notice and care which he took to prevent the spreading of these corruptions among them, the *Galatian Churches* recover'd the soundness of their Faith, and have preserved a name among the Eastern Churches, though under great variety of conditions, to this day. Some take notice, that this is one of the sharpest *Epistles* written by St. Paul. He appears indeed, by the beginning of it, to have been much surprized and moved at the news of a great and sudden alteration among them; which he was sure was not for the better. And by this plain dealing with them, he knew, till they consider'd better, they would be offended with him; but withal he tells them, this did best become a *Servant of Christ*, who, like a good Physician, hath more regard to the Disease than to the Palate of his Patient; *For if I yet pleased Men, I should not be the Servant of Christ.* But having vindicated his own honour, which the evil reports of the false Apostles made necessary; and argued with great strength and conviction against the imposers of the Law; he betakes himself to the enforcing the practice of the general and necessary Duties of *Christianity* upon these *Galatians*. If they had such a mind to keep the Law; *All the Law*, saith he, *is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* It was a vain and foolish thing for them to contend about keeping the Law, who did overthrow the main design of it, by their heats and animosities against each other; which, instead of preserving the honour of the Law, was the certain way to destroy one another: *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.* From hence he shews, that *hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies*, are as much the *lusts of the flesh*, as *adultery, fornication, murder, drunkenness, revellings, and such like*; and as destructive to mens Salvation; of the which, saith he, *I tell you now, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* And they that are true Christians must *crucify the flesh with all the affections and lusts thereof*; such as *vain-glory, love of contention, envying the reputation of others*: *Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another.* But the Apostle did not think the design of the Law, or the obligation of *Christianity* was satisfied with abstaining from doing injuries to others; therefore he proceeds to tell them what exercise of tenderness, compassion and readiness to do good to others were expected from them by the Law of Christ.

(I.) If a man, through the frailty of humane Nature, or the sudden surprize of a Temptation, be overtaken in a fault, do not, saith he, trample upon him, nor insult over him; but endeavour *with the spirit*



of meekness to recover him from his fall; considering that we carry about us the same load of flesh, and are exposed to continual Temptations our selves. Gal. 6. 1.

(2.) If we see others groaning under the heavy burthen of their own infirmities, or the pressures and calamities of the world, do not add more weight to their afflictions; but put your own shoulders under to bear a part with them, to make their burthen more easie to them; for herein lies a great deal of that duty which Christ hath laid on all his Disciples. *Bear ye one anothers burthens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ.* 6. 2.

(3.) If it be impossible for men to attend the service of your Souls and the affairs of this World together, never grudge nor repine at the exercise of your kindness and liberality towards your spiritual Teachers, v. 6. *Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things.* Which instances being mention'd, the Apostle subjoyns two things: 6. 6.

1. A general Proposition, viz. That every man shall receive in another World according to the good that he doth in this. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of his flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting: i. e.* He that looks only after his present advantage in this world, and dares not venture to do any thing out of hopes of recompence for it in another life, he is said to *sow to his flesh*; but he that is good and charitable and kind to others, without hopes of any other advantage than what God will give him for it, is said to *sow to the spirit*; the *flesh and spirit* being opposed as the two Centres of the different worlds: the great thing to which all things tend in this world being something carnal or that relates to the *Flesh*; and the great principle of another world, being wholly spiritual. And these two, *Flesh and Spirit*, are placed as two Loadstones drawing our hearts several ways; the one is much stronger, but at a greater distance; the other hath less force in it self, but is much nearer to us; by which means it draws more powerfully the hearts that are already touched with a strong inclination to it. But the Apostle useth the similitude of two Fields, wherein the product of the Seed answers to the nature of the Soil; *so he that sows to the flesh, i. e.* that minds only his present interest in this world, his harvest shall be proportionable to his seed, he may reap advantages to himself in this world suitable to his pains and industry; but the utmost this world can yield is but of a short continuance, being of a temporary, transient, corruptible nature, *he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the spirit, i. e.* hath so great a regard to the rewards of another life, that he is willing to let go a present enjoyment and bury it under ground, casting it in as seed into the earth in hopes of a future resurrection; however he may be condemned as a weak and improvident man by the men of this world, yet as certain as there is a life everlasting to come, so certainly shall all his good deeds yield an abundant increase and meet with a glorious recompence then, if there be no corrupt mixture in the sowing which may spoil the vertue of the seed, *for he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.* And let not men deceive themselves; if they look only at themselves and the things of this world, let their pretences be never so spiritual, if they dare not do acts of Charity so as to trust God for a reward, they do but *sow to the flesh*; and though the world

world may be cheated, and men may sometimes deceive themselves, yet *God cannot be mocked*; he knows the hearts and intentions, and secret designs of men, and according to them their reward shall be; *for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap*. This I take to be the natural and genuine meaning of the Apostle in those words.

2. A particular Exhortation, not to be discouraged *in well-doing*, which is the same with *sowing to the spirit* before, and with *doing good* in the following verse, both which are to be understood of the Works of Charity; and therefore we ought to take it in that sense here. These are especially called *good Works* in the New Testament; *Dorcas* is said to be a *Woman full of good Works and Alms-deeds which she did*. The Widow that was to be taken into Office in the Church, must be *well reported of for good Works*; and these presently follow, *the bringing up children, the lodging strangers, washing the Saints feet, and relieving the afflicted*. In the *Epistle to Titus*, St. Paul gives him a strict charge, that he deliver it with great assurance (*διαβεβαιῶσαι*) that they which believe in God might be careful to maintain good Works; these things are good and profitable unto men; Where the same word is used in the Greek, that is in the words of the Text. And to the same purpose other words of a like signification are used, as *ἐντρέφειν*, *To do good and to communicate forget not*; *Ἀγαθότεργεῖν*, *Charge them that are rich in this world—that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. That ye may abound to every good Work*, saith St. Paul; which he after explains, by *being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness*. So that although *well-doing* in the general may extend to every good action, yet by the particular sense of that phrase in the New Testament, and especially from the coherence of these words with the foregoing and following verses, it appears that the *well-doing* here spoken of, is to be understood of *Works of Charity*. Which the *Apostle*, as they were Christians, did suppose them to practise; but being apprehensive lest the discouragements they met with in the world, should make them grow cold and remiss in this great duty, he therefore exhorts them not to faint or *grow weary of doing it*: and to that end he lays down the most powerful Motive and Consideration; *for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not*; *i. e.* ye shall not miss of a reward from God.

So that from the words we may take notice of these two things which deserve our consideration.

1. The many Discouragements men meet with in the World, which are apt to make them grow *weary in well-doing*.

2. The mighty Incouragement which God gives to our continuance and perseverance in it; *for in due season we shall reap if we faint not*.

I. The many Discouragements men meet with in the World, which are apt to make them grow *weary in well-doing*.

The Precepts of Charity deliver'd by our Saviour and his Apostles are so plain, so full, so many, so easie to be understood; and those Precepts enforced by so just, and reasonable, and pious considerations, with respect to God, to the World, to Fellow-Christians, to the honour of our Religion, and lastly to our selves, from the comfort that is in well-doing, and the reward that follows it; that a man must have great impudence, to profess himself a Christian, and yet to think himself not obliged to do acts of Charity. But notwithstanding all this, and much more which might be said to this purpose, there are too many still who

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are ready to find out some plausible pretences to excuse them from *well-doing*; which being the greatest discouragements to men from continuing in it; I shall make it my present business to examine them; and to shew how little weight there is in them, especially being compared with the Authority of him who hath made this our duty, and the reward we may justly expect for performing it. And here I shall pass over the more common and trivial Objections, which every one can easily answer that makes them; and rather argue an unwilling mind to perform their duty; than one unsatisfied about the reasonableness of it; and I shall therefore insist on those that carry a greater appearance of strength in them: which are chiefly these two,

1. From the different *state* of our *Times* from those when these *Commands* of *Charity* were given.

2. From the sad *prospect* of our own *Affairs*, which seem rather to call for a *Care* of our selves than *Charity* to others.

1. The first pretence is from *the difference* of *Times*; “ There was  
 “ then, say such men, great reason for *Charity* which will not hold  
 “ now; those were times of persecution for Religion, and many were  
 “ driven to great streights and necessities on that account who deserved  
 “ to be relieved, and the Christians had been worse than Infidels not to  
 “ do good to men that were brought to want meerly for Christ’s and  
 “ the Gospel’s sake; the Laws then could take no care of these poor  
 “ and indigent persons; for the Laws made them so, being then oppo-  
 “ site to Christianity: but now our Religion is settled by the Laws; and  
 “ we have many Laws made for a competent provision for the Poor,  
 “ which will be sufficient if they be put in execution, and if they be not,  
 “ what *Charity* is this to relieve an idle and disorderly sort of People  
 “ who live upon Alms, when it is greater *Charity* to such to make  
 “ them work and to provide for their own subsistence?

This is the force of the Objection which seems to have a great deal of strength and weight in it: but before I give an Answer to it, I must acknowledge the truth of some things contained therein.

(1.) That there is a great difference in the case of *Charity*, where our Religion is settled by Law, and where it is persecuted by it: For a larger measure and degree is justly required in a time of Persecution, in as much as those are the truest Objects of *Charity* who prefer *the keeping Faith and a good Conscience* before the good things of this Life. And we ought to look upon it as an unvaluable blessing, that we have the *Christian*, yea, the *Reformed Christian Religion* settled by our *Laws*. And God grant it may ever so continue!

(2.) It cannot be denied that we have very good Laws for the maintenance of the Poor, and that they might be sufficient for their common necessities, if they were duly executed. And it is a very just and reasonable distinction which our Laws make between the involuntary Poor, who are made so by the hand of Heaven, either by Sickness, or Lameness, or Age, or Children, or Fire, &c. and the voluntary Poor, who may help themselves but will not, being idle, dissolute, and slothful persons. These deserve rather the hand of Justice to punish them than that of *Charity* to relieve them: For *St. Paul* himself is so far from thinking this to be true *Charity*, that he hardly thinks it so to keep such from starving, <sup>2 Thess. 3.</sup> if we take that Proverbial saying in its strict and literal sense, *If any* <sup>10.</sup> *would not work, neither should he eat.*

(3.) I grant that it is greater Charity to put persons upon providing for themselves than to relieve their present necessities. For that is the greatest Charity which doth a man the most good. And he that reduceth a dissolute and wandring Beggar to the taking pains for himself and Family, cures an ill habit of his Mind; puts him into the way of Vertue and Sobriety; gives him a lasting stock for himself and Family (for diligence and industry is so;) keeps him out of the danger of the worst sort of Company; gains him more Friends, who will be far more ready to help a person industrious in his Poverty than the most clamorous and importunate Beggar. And therefore our Laws have wisely determin'd, that Work-houses are the best Hospitals for the Poor, who are able to help themselves. But after these concessions, I am far from thinking the command of Charity to be swallowed up in our Laws for the relief of the Poor. For,

(1.) If our Laws were the best in the World for this purpose, yet, if they be not duly executed, they leave as much room for Charity as if there were none. What if a Law were made that there should be no Poor at all among us; but that immediate care should be taken, upon any man's falling into decay, that his Stock should be supplied out of the superfluities of the Rich; If this Law were not executed, men would be altogether as miserable in their Poverty, and as great Objects of Charity, as if there were no such Law in being. For the making of a Law for their supply without putting it in execution, is but like the Person in St. James, who said to those who were naked and destitute of daily food, be ye warmed and filled; but notwithstanding gave them nothing needful for the Body; what doth this profit? What advantage or satisfaction is it to a Man to starve with the Law on his side? Or can men be better fed or cloathed with the Words of a Law than of any particular Person? If not, then if care be not taken for the relief and maintenance of the Poor according to the Laws, there is as great need of Charity as if there were none at all.

Jam. 2. 16.

(2.) If we suppose the Laws for relief of the Poor to be duly executed, yet there are many particular cases of Charity which often happen which the Laws cannot be supposed to provide for. The Law takes care only of general, and notorious, and common cases; but there are continual Instances of singular and extraordinary cases where relief is as much wanted, but is rarely challenged. How often is some men's Reputation a snare to themselves and Families; who had rather sink silently into the gulf of Misery, than have their wants made known to their insulting neighbours, among whom they have lived in as good fashion as themselves? How many have been tempted rather to put an end to a miserable Life, than to be despised and contemned for their Poverty in their old Age! How many are unwilling to make known their condition for fear of a repulse, and being thought Liars, or impudent and common Beggars! How hardly will some pinch themselves and Families, before they will make known their necessities! and some have been known to have brought themselves so low, that when their sad condition hath been discovered, they have been past all possibility of recovery. I hope such Instances are not frequent among us. And yet we are lately told in Print by a Member of this City, *That he hath reason to believe many hundreds have perished through want of late years.* If this be true, and their case was known; what a shame and dishonour is it, in the midst of so much plenty and luxury, to suffer such a reproach to Christianity to be among

Proposals  
for Employ-  
ment of the  
Poor, p. 29.  
1681.

among us? But if their case were not known in time; the stain is not quite wiped off, because there ought to be in so great, so rich, so well governed a City, a due care taken to find out as well as to relieve the truly necessitous.

(3.) The obligations of Charity reach much farther than the force of our Laws doth: For how small a matter within this City doth answer the Letter of the Law, where Persons enjoy very great and plentiful Estates? And is that all which their thankfulness to God, their love to their Brethren, and the regard to our Saviour's Commands will draw from them? Is this *being merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful*? Is this *giving our Alms in secret, that thy Father which seeth in secret may reward thee openly*? Is this *making to our selves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness*? Is this *being rich towards God; being rich in good works, being ready to distribute, willing to communicate*? Is this *doing good to all men as we have opportunity*? Is this *feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, visiting the sick and imprison'd*? Can we imagine that will be a good answer at the great day, that we have paid our Rates to the Poor? If the Christian Charity had extended no farther, *Julian* needed not have been so solicitous to have the Heathens equal them?

Luk. 6. 36.

Matt. 6. 4.

Luk. 16. 9.

2. Tim. 6.

18.

Gal 6. 10.

Matt. 25.

35, 36.

The true Charity of Christians is a free and voluntary thing, not what men are forced to do by the Laws; It is a largeness of mind, that disposeth men to do good to others, and embraceth every opportunity for that purpose; It is the flowing of a Fountain which runs freely, easily and constantly; and not like the pouring water out of a narrow mouthed Vessel, where but little comes, and with a great deal of noise. Charity spreads it self like the beams of the Sun, and warms and enlivens the colder parts of the Earth; it pierceth into the bowels of it, and makes it self a passage to those secret and hidden objects which are out of the view of the World. True Christian Charity hath arms so large to comprehend the whole World within them; but it is the Life and Spirit of that Body whereof Christ is the Head; it passeth from one Member to another, emptying it self from the larger vessels into the less, and so by a constant motion and course through the Body it keeps heat and union in all the Parts. To do good because one cannot help it, is to obey the Law of Necessity and not of Charity. He that resolves to go no farther in Charity than the Law requires him, declares he would not have gone so far unless the Law had forced him; which is in effect to tell the World, he hath not so much as an inclination to Charity.

(4.) Our Laws give great encouragement to the best, the noblest, the most lasting Works of Charity; such as erecting Work-houses for the Poor that are able to work, endowing Hospitals and Alms-houses for the impotent, distemper'd, and aged Poor; setting up Free-Schools for the Education of Youth. And I never yet met with any Objection against these that will not hold against the best designs in the World. For it is possible they may be abused, and may accidentally prove an occasion of Idleness to some Persons, and they may exceed the due proportion of Persons fit for them, (although we yet see no great danger of that;) yet what design can the wit of Man pitch upon in a captious and suspicious Age, that will not meet with Objections from those that have a mind to cavil? The best Religion in the World, the best Church, the best Government, the best Laws, the best Men, cannot escape the censures of ill minded Men; and why should we think the bests designs of Charity should? But some Men whose minds are set upon one particular way of Charity, are apt to disparage

Stat. de 39.

Eliz. c. 5.

c. 21. Jac.

c. 1. 14. Car.

2. c. 9. Co.

2. Inst.

723.

disparage all other ways to advance their own: which is the common Error of Mankind, to think sufficient Right is not done to the thing they admire, unless they undervalue all other things in comparison with it. But it is a part of Charity to allow, approve, and encourage all true ways of Charity; not to set up bodily Labour against the improvement of the Mind; nor the learning of Arts and Sciences to the disparagement of breeding men up for Trade and Business; nor to cry down Hospitals and Infirmaries for the Lame and Sick and Aged, in comparison of Work-houses for the Young and Strong and Healthful. For all these are excellent and most commendable ways of Charity, and have nothing of contradiction or inconsistency with one another, if they do answer the ends of their Institution. I do not go about to lessen the esteem of casual and occasional Acts of Charity done to particular Persons in present want; when our Blessed Saviour in the midst of all his Poverty took care of the *Poor*: for when he spake to *Judas* at the Table, the Disciples supposed it was *that he should give something to the Poor*. What admirable Charity was this, when he had not whereon to lay his head, and was at the expence of a Miracle to give an entertainment to the People, yet he had an Officer, one of his own Apostles, to take care of the Poor! And when he pronounceth such Blessedness to those who do Acts of Charity to them, and accounts them *as done unto himself*; which is the highest expression of his gracious acceptance of such Acts from us, and of the great obligation that lies upon us to do them; since we ought not to think much of any thing we do for the honour of our Lord and Saviour, who did and suffer'd so much for our sakes: Yet when we compare these with the publick Works of Charity before mention'd, being done for the same end; we shall find these to exceed the other in some material circumstances, which add much to the excellency of them.

Jsh. 13. 29.

Matt. 25.  
34. 40.

(I.) In the Largeness and Extensiveness of their design. Other Charities are for the present relief of some poor and indigent Persons, whose bowels are refreshed, and backs are clothed, and hearts are eased, by the kindness of others to them; but these are soon gone, and mens Charity cannot follow them beyond the Grave. But publick endowments of Charity are to last for ever, and do good to the Poor of many Generations. The Ages to come will rise up and bless their Memory who took care to do good to those whom they never saw; and to provide for such, yea very many such, whom it was impossible for them to know. When a man sees a great object of Charity, as the Widow and Fatherless under extream necessities, the Mother weeping and bemoaning her Children, not having bread to put into their Mouths, and the poor Children looking ghastly and frightfully, crying for want of bread, but not knowing where to get it; the very uneasiness of a man's own mind at the sense of so much misery in others, will extort some present relief to still their cries, and to put such an unpleasing Idea out of his Fancy. But if the Object it self do not move, yet Importunity may: if that doth not, yet custom, reputation, natural humanity, recommendation of Friends, may prevail on men to be sometimes liberal to Persons whom they see under present Wants. But much doth all this fall short of a fixed, certain, perpetual provision for the necessities of those, whom none of those Arguments could excite men to shew kindness to? The other is a more sensible, natural, private Charity; this is a more rational, generous Christian Charity; being built upon more free, and noble, and lasting

lasting considerations, most agreeable to the design and honour of the Christian Religion, which puts men upon doing the best things and which tend to the greatest benefit and advantage of mankind. And in the comparison of things that are good, the largest, the most publick, the most lasting ought to have the pre-eminence.

(2.) In their Consequence and Usefulness; which ought to be especially regarded in Acts of Charity. For true Charity must be accompanied with Wisdom and Discretion. It is not a man's profuse liberality to every one that asks; nor making himself poor to make others rich; it is not squandering away an Estate among idle and indigent Persons, that makes him a charitable man; but it is a wise dispensing the Gifts God hath bestowed upon him for the benefit and advantage of others. And the greater the Good is that is received the greater is the Charity in bestowing it. The Schoolmen reckon up seven sorts of Corporal Alms, and as many of Spiritual; *to visit the sick, to feed the hungry, to satisfy the thirsty, to cloath the naked, to redeem the captive, to entertain the stranger, to bury the dead*; are the former: *to teach the ignorant, to advise the doubtful, to comfort the sorrowful, to correct the wicked, to forgive the injurious, to bear the troublesome, to pray for all*; are the Instances of Spiritual Charity. But this is rather a distribution of the different sorts of Charity, than any just Rule and Measure of our obligation to the Acts of it. For although in the general, spiritual Acts of Charity to mens Souls, are to be preferred before what refers only to their Bodies; yet in particular cases a man may be more obliged to relieve their outward necessities than to give them good counsel for their Souls; *i. e.* when those necessities are urgent and pressing, and by a present supply they may have longer time and be in better disposition to receive spiritual Advice. Some dispute if a bad man be in greater want, and a good man in less want, which of these two is to be preferred? And the Casuists say, *The Work of Mercy* is greater in the former Case, but *the Work of Charity* in the latter. For *Mercy* only relates to another's misery; but *Charity* takes in other considerations. So I say, when the competition lies between the present supply of some in great want, and making a lasting provision for more persons in less want, there may be more *Mercy* in the former case, but there may be greater *Charity* in the latter: because the more publick, the more common, the more useful the Good is, the greater the *Charity* is in doing of it. I will not dispute, whether the breeding up of youth to Learning or Labour be among us the greater *Charity*? I know no reason why two such excellent ways of *Charity* should be set at variance with each other. But certainly we are not to judge of mens usefulness to the publick merely by the strength of their limbs, or the hardness of their hands, or the nimbleness of their fingers. Is it not possible that by the charitable education of Children in the ways of Learning and Knowledge some may arrive at a greater capacity of serving God and their Country, than if they had been grinding in a Mill, or tugging at an Oar all that while? It is not only keeping People to hard labour, or to continual working, which is the design of Charity; but the most excellent way of Charity, is to improve all Persons according to their several Capacities, so as to make them more useful and serviceable to the Publick. This is not only *doing Good* to the particular persons, but to the whole Nation; and *Charity* is not barely to be measured by the quality of its Acts, but by the largeness of the

*visito, potio, cibo, redimo, tego, colligo, condico. Consule, castiga, scilicet, remitte, ser, ora.*  
2. 2. Q. 32.  
art. 2.

Cajet. in 2.  
2. Q. 32.  
art. 4.

circumference it fills. The breeding up some few great and usefull Persons to a Nation is a Work of Charity the Publick Good is more concerned in, than in the manual labours of many industrious Artificers : who do serve the Publick too in their way ; but there is a difference between those lesser Stars in the Firmament, that wanted a Telescope to discover them, and those great and splendid Bodies which influence the Earth, and direct mens passage in the deep Waters. That is therefore the greatest and most usefull Charity, which tends to the improving mankind according to their different Capacities ; some for Labour, others for Trade, others to be usefull to the rest of mankind with a respect either to their Country or to their Estates, their Bodies or their Souls : And which takes all possible care to prevent the unspeakable and innumerable mischiefs which idleness and debauchery do bring upon mankind.

Mat. 6. 3. (3.) In the Honour they bring to Religion. There are some cases, wherein our Charity must be so secret, that *our left hand must not know what our right hand doth*, i. e. when there is danger of vanity and ostentation in the doing of our Alms ; but when the honour of God and Religion is concerned, then *let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good Works, and glorifie your Father which is in heaven*. But how can men see those Acts of Charity which are done in secret, and are industriously concealed from the knowledge of men ? And if that were to be taken as a strict command in all cases, then all the publick Works of Charity, which are most considerable for the Honour of God and Religion would be forbidden by the Gospel. But where men do excellent and praise-worthy things for great and good ends, without Pharisaical Hypocrisie, it is the general concernment of Religion and the glory of God not to have such things kept from the knowledge of the World. For herein, saith our Saviour, *is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my Disciples*. So shall ye appear to be my Disciples, for Christ had owned them for his Disciples before, but this would manifest their being so to the World ; which would bring the greatest honour to God and to the Christian Religion. And it is certain nothing did more advance the reputation of it in the World, than their singular and extraordinary care of the Poor. For they not only relieved in the first place those that were Christians, according to the Apostle's rule in the next Verse ; *especially to those of the House-hold of Faith* ; but their Charity extended to the very Heathens : which Julian takes notice of with great Indignation : *Is it not a shame for us not to relieve our own poor, when the Christians not only take care of their own but of ours too ?* And by the case of *Lucian's Peregrinus*, it appears, that some pretended to be Christians on purpose that they might be partakers of the great bounty and kindness which the Christians shewed to their Brethren. But such instances as these did not make *them weary in well-doing* ; but still as the Church increased in Riches by the free and large oblations of the People ; so greater care was taken for the erecting Hospitals for the reception of the Poor, who could provide no habitation for themselves ; and this was then always looked on as a particular concernment of Religion, and not as a mere political Constitution.

Thus the matters of Charity stood in the Christian Church, till men came to be perswaded that by the Priest's saying so many Prayers for the dead, their Souls might be removed out of Purgatory and translated



to Heaven. And when this notorious Cheat prevailed, and the stream of mens Charity was diverted from the Poor, to the making good bargains for their Souls. And who could blame men who had spent all their days in Wickedness, or raised an Estate by Fraud and Oppression, if at their death they took care to leave enough to have so many Masses said for their Souls, as might by a reasonable computation serve for their Redemption out of Purgatory at a marketable Price. When the laying open these Cheats to the World, gave the first occasion to the Reformation, a mighty out-cry was every where made, that the Foundation of all good Works was destroyed, and if the Reformation prevailed there would be no want of Faith, when every one might chuse what he pleased, but nothing like Charity was to be expected. To remove the former Calumny, our Reformers published the Articles of our Religion; and to take away the latter, they put that admirable Prince *Edward* the Sixth upon the new founding the famous *Hospitals* of this *City*, (for although there were some *Hospitals* before, such as *St. Mary Bethlehem*, *Elfying Spittal*, *St. Bartholomew's*, yet they were inconsiderable in comparison of what they have been since.) For by the Care and Charity of the Governors and other Members of the *City*, they have yielded a wonderfull support to a mighty number of poor Children, and wounded and diseased Persons both in Body and Mind; which being joyned with another *Foundation* of *one single Person*, this *City* may justly vye with any other in the Christian World as to so many and so great Foundations, for the best kind of Christian Charity, in the Education of Youth and the Care of the Impotent and Diseased.

Our Religion teacheth us better, than to have so vain and fond an opinion of our good Works as to think we *merit* Heaven by them; but surely our Charity is so much the greater, if we do these things out of a sense of gratitude to God, than if we think to drive a bargain with him, and put our imperfect Works in the balance with an infinite and eternal Reward. Those of the Church of *Rome* may think they carry on a better Trade with Heaven than we do; and that they have a mighty advantage in the *over-balance* of what they hope for in exchange for what they part with; but they had best look well to the stating their Accounts, the due value of their Works, and the reason of expecting such a disproportionable return; lest at last they deceive themselves, and totally fail of their expectations: For in the great day of account, all things will be most exactly weighed; and although the greatest Benefactors rejoyce in the highest Acts of *Kindness*, yet when any thing is challenged in a way of *Justice*, men do not love to be imposed upon or over-reached in a Bargain. What madness then is it, for any sinfull Creatures to hope that any Acts of theirs, being weighed by divine Justice, can bear any proportion in a way of *Merit*, with no less than the Kingdom of Heaven? This we utterly disclaim, and owe all our hopes of Heaven merely to the infinite Goodness and Mercy of God through his Son Christ Jesus: and yet we think our selves never the less bound to be fruitfull in good Works; because we hereby testify our obedience to the Laws of Christ; our sincere love to God and our Brethren; our readiness to do good to others by the mercies which God hath bestowed upon us; our sense of the obligation we have to one another, as partaking of the same nature, and liable to the same infirmities, and exposed to the same calamities; our expectation of a blessed reward,

though not due to the merit of our Works, but to the infinite Grace and Mercy of God. And I do not see, but where men have a due regard to God and Religion, such considerations as these do more effectually stir men up to true Acts of Charity, than those mercenary and corrupt Doctrines in the Roman Church; which look rather like cunning devices to pick the Peoples Pockets than any real Arguments for Charity. And upon a carefull examination, it hath been found, that our *Protestant Doctrine* was so far from stopping up the Channel that ran so freely before, that within sixty years after the *Reformation* more great and noble Works of Charity were done in founding of *Schools* and *Hospitals*, than for some hundreds of years before; and some say from the *Conquest* till that time of the *Reformation*. But this I have formerly insisted more upon, on the like Occasion.

The summ of what I have said is this, that we have no reason to be weary in well doing, on the account of our Laws for the common relief of the Poor; because those Laws cannot provide for all cases of Charity; and because they do suppose the greatest Works of Charity to depend upon the largeness and freeness of those mens minds to whom God gives a heart to do great and worthy things with the Estates he hath given to them.

2. But there is another plausible pretence yet behind, viz. from the consideration of our own Times. "Were the times calm and fixed; had we a fair prospect of things before us, that were a great encouragement to Charity; but we live in perplexed and doubtfull times and know not what may become of us all; mens minds are strangely discomposd and full of Fears; and therefore this is a very unseasonable Time to perswade them to Charity, when they ought rather to lay up and secure something against an evil day.

To which I answer,

I. What times were those the Primitive Christians lived in, who so much abounded in Charity? St. Paul tells us of himself and his Brethren, *1 Cor. 4* 11, 12, 13. *they were hungry and thirsty, naked and buffeted, having no certain dwelling-place; labouring, working with their own hands, reviled, persecuted, defamed;* and yet nothing relating to this World was so much their care and concernment as providing for the Poor. For when he went up to *Gal. 2* 9, 10. *Jerusalem*, and there conferred with *James, Cephas* and *John*, at his departure they had nothing to desire of him and *Barnabas*, but to remember the Poor, the same which I also was forward to do; as St. Paul relates it. And you may see how earnest he was in it, by his dealing with the *Corinthians*, when he perswades them to a liberal contribution to the poor Christians in *Judea*, who then suffer'd much either through Famine or Persecution or both. St. Paul had undertaken for the Churches of *Achaia*, (of which *Corinth*, being a populous and trading City, was the chief) but the Collection not being yet made among them, he sends some on purpose to *Corinth* to make all ready against his coming to them, and perswades them to great liberality in their giving: for which end he makes use of the most powerfull and prevailing arguments and great arts of insinuation. (1.) He sets before them the Example of the Churches of *Macedonia*; which is truly a very extraordinary instance of Christian Charity. They were under great trouble and deep poverty at that time themselves, yet understanding by St. Paul this occasion of more than ordinary Charity, they not only straitned themselves even beyond their abilities, but did it with that cheerfulness and satisfaction of mind, that they intreated the *Apostle* to accept of what they had given, and to undertake

undertake the managing of so good a Work. And St. Paul seems to speak of it with a kind of transport, *Moreover, Brethren, we do you to wit of the Grace of God bestowed on the the Churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality; for to their power, I bear record, yea and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; praying us with much intreaty, that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministring to the Saints.* Nothing can be added to the weight of these words and the *Emphasis* wherewith they are penned.

(2.) He lets them know what a shame and reproach it would be to so famous a Church for other *Divine Gifts* to come behind others in Charity. *Therefore as ye abound in every thing, in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us,* (what artificial insinuations are these!) *see that ye abound in this Grace also.* (3.) But lest he should seem to press too hard upon them, he draws off again; *I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.* (4.) Yet he hath no sooner said this, but he comes on again with the most prevailing Argument taken from the example of our Blessed Saviour: *For ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor that ye through his poverty might be rich.* Can any thing be more moving to Christians than this? (5.) His design was not to lay a burden upon them, but to excite mutual compassion in Christians to one another.

(6.) This would be a demonstration to the World of their kindness to him, and that he had not spoken great things of them without cause.

(7.) They might justly expect a retribution suitable to their Bounty; *But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; but he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.* (8.) This would be the occasion of many thanksgivings and prayers to God for them. *For the administration of this service, not only supplieth the want of the Saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God.* (Whilst by the experiment of this ministration they glorifie God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men.) *And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding Grace of God in you. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.* Wherein he supposes the thing as already done, as believing it impossible for them to resist the force of so many Arguments. And yet all this while St. Paul supposes their condition to be such as in a little time they might stand in need of relief from others; which he thought was so far from being an argument against present Charity, that he useth it the other way; *that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance may also be a supply for your want, i. e.* Do not consider what times may come upon your selves so as to hinder doing good while it is in your power to do it; leave those things to the wise Providence of God; if he think fit to reduce you to want, he that now excites your hearts to do good to them, will stir up others to make up the same measure to you. So that while the Christians either were under great persecutions, or in expectation of them, through the Power of the Magistrates, or the Rage of the People; yet the *Apostles* pressed them, and that with great success, to a free, chearfull, liberal contribution to relieve those who labour under greater wants than others.

2. This very consideration is used as an argument in *Scripture* to persuade men to Charity; viz. That we do not know what times may come upon

Eccles. 11. upon us. Give thy portion to seven and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. This seems to the men of this World a strange way of reasoning, and it may be they suspect from hence that Solomon was not so wise a man as they took him to be. "What! give away what one hath because one knows not what times may come." No certainly, say they, we ought to get what we can, and to save what we have, for that reason. The difference of reasoning in this case proceeds upon the different Principles on both sides. Solomon believed a Divine Providence and they do not. And he thought that would be particularly concerned for the good of those, whom no sad prospect of Affairs could discourage from well-doing according to their Ability and Opportunity.

II. And so I come to the encouragement here given to patient continuance in well-doing; for, in due season we shall reap if we faint not. Wherein are three things considerable.

1. The certainty of a future recompence for well-doing. We shall reap.

2. The time of receiving it, not immediately, but in due season.

3. The condition supposed on our parts, which is continuance in well-doing. If we faint not. Some understand it as relating to the reward, that we shall receive it without fainting; reaping and harvest being a time of labour and sickness; but the more natural meaning of  $\mu\eta\ \epsilon\lambda\lambda\upsilon\sigma\mu\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ , seems to be the taking the participle, as implying the condition on our parts.

Heb. 6.10. 1. The certainty of a future recompence for well-doing. God is not unrighteous, saith the Apostle, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed towards his name; in that ye have ministered to the Saints and do minister. Though it be a work and labour, though it may seem uneasy and troublesome for a while; yet being a work and labour of love; it is but the work and labour of sowing, which a man goes through the more chearfully because he expects a plentiful increase. He doth not reap presently the very same which he sowed, but a wonderfull improvement of it, when the seed being cast into a fruitfull soil brings forth some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred fold. And this Harvest doth not depend upon the uncertainty of the Weather; here are no fears of blasting and mildew, or locust to prevent the joyfull expectation of it; no danger of the seed rotting in the ground or being pickt up by the fowls of the air; but he that ministrereth seed to the sower, will multiply the seed sown, and increase the fruits of their righteousness. His Word is engaged that they which sow shall reap a plentiful increase; and therefore God will not be unrighteous in not performing his Promise. This men may as certainly depend upon as that Night and Day shall follow each other; for Heaven and Earth may pass away, but the Word of God endureth for ever.

2 Cor. 9.  
10.

2. The time of this retribution, in due season. Most men are unwilling to trust God too long upon his bare Word; they would have something in hand, and the remainder hereafter. And God by the course of his wise Providence, doth very often order things so in this World that the most charitable men, although they may not abound with the greatest riches, yet generally meet with the fewest difficulties; and in their straights find more unexpected assistance than other men. David made it the observation of his own time, that in all his days though he

was

was then grown *old*, he *never saw the righteous*, i. e. the charitable man, *forfaken, nor his seed begging bread*. And they have far more reason than other men to hope, that if they do fall into trouble and sickness, God will have a particular regard to them; and besides this, they have the natural or rather spiritual contentment that follows *doing good*; and they have more satisfaction and ease in it, than others have in hoarding up Wealth for they know not whom. But none of all these are the reaping here mention'd: They are like *Ruth's gleaning of handfulls in the field of Boaz*, which shewed a more than ordinary kindness; notwithstanding which he said, *The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust*. So it is here, they may have better gleanings and fuller handfulls sometimes in the common Field of Providence, but this is not the full recompence which the God of Mercy will give to those that trust in his Word. That is only to be expected at the great day when the Lord the righteous Judge shall say, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye cloathed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. For in as much as ye have done it to one of the least of these my Brethren ye have done it unto me*. O the infinite Goodness and unexpressible kindness of our Blessed Saviour, who in the day of Judgment will interpret all Acts of Charity so much to the advantage of those that do them! Who would deny any thing to a Servant of that Lord who takes all kindneses to them as done to himself, and rewards them accordingly? What other apprehensions will covetous and hard-hearted Wretches then have of their sordid penuriousness in heaping up riches, without any tenderness or compassion to the necessities of their Brethren and Christ's representatives? How will they wish ten thousand times, when it will be to no purpose to wish, that they had rather they had laid out their money in *doing good*, than laid it up for those, who may go to Hell the faster for the great Temptations they leave behind them. Neither let the prodigal Fools think they shall escape better, for being so contrary to the griping and stingy humour of the covetous; for it is not the vain and careless squandering an Estate away in riotous courses will make a man's condition more tolerable at that day; but it is the provident, seasonable, carefull distribution of our Charity for wise and good ends, which shall meet with so glorious a reward.

3. Especially, in the last place, *if we faint not*, and do not repent of what good we have done, but continue so doing to the end of our Lives. For this reason I presume it is, that many reserve their greatest *Acts of Charity* to their Deaths; but it is dangerous putting off their Repenting and doing Good till they come to die, for fear their hearts, or those whom they trust deceive them. But if men begin to do well in their health and strength, let them *not faint* when they come to die; but continue *charitable* as well as *faithfull unto death*, and God will give them a crown of life.

And now my business is to make particular *Application* to this great Assembly *not to be weary in well-doing*; and therefore I shall repeat to you, *A true Report, &c.*

You perceive by this Relation, how much Good hath been already done in the case of the Education of poor Children, and in the cure of  
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and provision for the Maimed and Distracted; all which are very commendable ways of *well-doing*, and it is a great advantage to me this Day, that I am only to perswade you *not to be weary in this well-doing, for in due season you shall reap if you faint not.* You have already broke through many discouragements, and since the sad calamities of Plague and Fire, which made such desolations among us, you have done even as to these charitable Foundations, what hath been to the Admiration and Astonishment of beholders. Which of us all who saw the City in its Ruins, with so many Churches and Halls and Hospitals buried in its rubbish, could ever hope to have lived to see them rise again with a much greater Glory; and our new-built Hospitals to appear with that Magnificence, that strangers may easily mistake them for Palaces? We have lived in an Age that hath beheld strange Revolutions, astonishing Judgments, and wonderfull Deliverances; what all the Fermentations that are still among us may end in, God alone knows; our unanswerable returns to God for his great Mercies may justly make us fear, that he hath greater scourges provided for us; the best thing we can do for our selves, is to amend our ways, and to bring forth fruits worthy of amendment of life; not barely to own and profess the *Protestant Religion*, but to adorn it, by holy and exemplary lives, and doing all the Good we can while we have opportunity. And to that end I shall offer these considerations, and so conclude.

1. The more Good ye do, the more Comfort you will find in the doing it. *Therefore be not weary in well-doing.* There is a certain secret pleasure and inward satisfaction that follows *doing Good*; which encreases by exercise and continuance. This is so far above the pleasure of the Covetous and Voluptuous in pursuit of their ends, that it approaches nearest of any thing we can conceive, to the satisfaction of the Almighty, who delighteth in doing Good. It was a remarkable saying of our Saviour, which St. Paul preserved, *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* How happy do the poor think themselves, when those who are Rich are bountifull to them! But the advantage is on your side; they are the receivers but you are the gainers. What you bestow on them *you lay up in store for your selves*: which will yield far greater comfort when you come to die than having raised a vast Estate: for that is only carrying a greater account into another World; but this is a great help to discharge it.

2. Doing Good is really one of the best parts of our Religion. True Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, *to visit the Widow and Fatherless in their Affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the World.* It is not giving a cold formal visit to the Widow and Fatherless that makes any part of Religion, but doing all the good we can to them, by advice and counsel, by supplying their wants and taking care of their affairs. No Duty takes in so much of the substance of Religion as true Charity. *It is the fulfilling of the Law; the end of the Commandment, i. e. of the Gospel; the bond of perfectness.* That, without which all other pretence to Religion is but flattering of God and mere hypocrisy. For all our Prayers and Praises are but verbal acknowledgments; that which he hath put the trial of our love to himself upon, is our love to our Brethren. *For he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

3. Doing Good to others is taking the best care of our selves. We all seem very apprehensive of dangerous times, and very fearfull what may

A. S. 20 35.

Jam. 1. 27.

Gal. 5. 14.

Tim. 1. 5.

Col. 3. 14.

Joh. 4. 20.

may become of us ; the best course every wise and good man can take in difficult and uncertain times, is to do his own duty and to leave events to God. And there is no duty more unquestionable, more safe, more advantageous, to himself as well as to others, than *to do good*, i. e. to be kind and obliging to all, to forgive injuries, to reconcile enemies, to redeem captives, to visit the distressed, and according to our abilities and opportunities to relieve those that are in wants and necessities. This is the way *to dwell safely, and to be quiet from the fear of evil* ; for as long as God governs the World he will take care of those who commit themselves to him *by patient continuance in well-doing*.

4. Doing Good doth the most answer the obligations God hath laid upon you by the Mercies he hath vouchsafed to you.

And now give me leave to plead with you the *Cause* of the *Poor* and *Fatherless Children*, the *Cause* of the *Wounded* and *Maimed*, who cannot help themselves, the *Cause* of those who deserve so much more pity because they cannot pity themselves, being deprived of the use of their Understandings. If God hath provided well for you and for your Children, wherein can you better express your thankfulness for such a mercy than by your kindness and charity to those who are destitute of the means to make them Men. If you have reason to bless God for your good *Education*, shew it by taking care of theirs who may hereafter bless God for your kindness to them. If God hath blessed you with Riches and a plentiful Estate in this *City*, and raised you beyond your hopes and expectations, what can you do more becoming the *Members* of this *City* than to be kind to the *Children* of those who have been such and reduced to *Poverty* ? Remember from what God hath raised you ; do not think much to consider what you have been, as well as what you are. You can never take the just height of God's Mercies to you unless you begin at the bottom ; and let others measure your height now, as some have done that of the *Pyramids*, by the length of *your shadow*, by the refreshments they find under you. Think what God hath brought you to, and for what end ; Was it for your own sakes, that you might be full, while others are empty ; that you might swim in abundance, while others are pinched with necessities ? Was it not rather to make you his *Conduit-Pipes* to convey blessings and comforts to others through your means ? When you are in health and at ease, then think of the miserable condition of those who lie in *Hospitals* under aches and pains and sores, having nothing to comfort them, but the charity of good People to them. They cannot represent their own condition to you, being unable to come abroad to do it. Be ye good *Samaritans* to the wounded and hurt, bind up their wounds with your kindness, and help to defray the charges of their cures : This is *loving our Neighbour as our selves*, and that is *fulfilling the Law*, and the *great design of the Gospel*. Lastly, when you think what a blessing it is that you do enjoy the use of *your Reason and Understanding*, pity the poor Creatures whom God hath deprived of it. How easily, how justly, how suddenly may God cast you into their Condition ? Shew the esteem that you have of this Mercy of God to your selves, by the freeness of your Charity to those that want it. Therefore, I conclude in the *Words* of the Text, *Let us not be weary in any of these ways of well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.*

# SERMON XX.

OF THE

## Nature of Superstition.

Preached at

**S<sup>t</sup>. Dunstons West,**

March 31. MDCLXXXII.

COLOS. II. 23.

*Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body, not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.*

**S**AINT Paul was now a Prisoner at Rome for the sake of the Gospel, when he wrote this Epistle to the *Colossians*, but his mind was at liberty; And the compass of his thoughts and cares was so far from being confined within the Walls of a Prison, that it reached not only to the Churches of *Asia* planted by himself, as those of *Ephesus* and *Galatia*; but to those which had never seen him, as the *Colossians* and *Laodiceans*: For saith he, *I would that you knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.* Had not he trouble enough with the Churches of Rome and Greece, and those he had conversed with in other parts, but he must take upon him to interpose in the affairs of those Churches he had never seen? But such was the largeness of the Apostle's mind, the fervour of his Zeal, the extent of his Charity, that *the care of all the Churches was upon him*; but especially those which had been planted by his means, although not by his personal endeavours; among which, in all probability, this of the *Colossians* was one. For this *Epaphras* whom *St. Paul* calls a faithful Minister of Christ to them, was imploy'd as an Evangelist under him; and particularly in the Cities of *Laodicea*, *Hierapolis*, and *Colosse*, which were not far distant from each other in *Phrygia*; and for the Churches there settled, *S. Paul* testifies, that he had a mighty zeal and concernment: From whence it arose, that hearing of *S. Paul's* Imprisonment at Rome, he resolves to take a Journey thither to acquaint



acquaint him with the State of those Churches, and to desire his Advice and Direction in the present danger they were in, of being seduced from the simplicity of the Gospel, by the plausible insinuations of false Teachers, who pretended to give them a more refined System of Religion, by a composition of Law and Gospel and Philosophy all together. S. Paul understanding by him the dangerous circumstances they were in, although Epaphras himself was made a *Fellow-Prisoner* with him; as appears by the *Epistle to Philemon*, sent at the same time with this; yet he finds means by *Tychicus* and *Onesimus* to convey this Epistle to them. Philem. 23 Wherein by an admirable art of insinuation, far above the eloquent *exordiums* of the Heathen Orators, he lets them understand, how passionately he was concerned for their welfare; and what an *Agony* he suffered in his own breast for their sakes, lest under some artificial colours and very fair pretences, they should be drawn off from the Love and Unity and Sincerity of the Gospel. For after he had told them *what conflict he had for them that had not seen his face in the flesh*, he immediately adds, that it was, *that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the Mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* Coloss. 2: 2, 3. And when he hath thus set forth the excellency and sufficiency of the Gospel; he then lets fall an intimation of his design, *And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.* V. 4. But lest they should suspect from hence that ill offices had been done them, and they had been misrepresented to S. Paul; in the next verse he tells them, that at that distance, *he did rejoyce, beholding their order, and the stedfastness of their faith in Christ.* V. 5. V. 6. And therefore exhorts them, *As they had received Christ Jesus the Lord, so to walk in him: i. e. to adhere to that Faith which they at first embraced;* as he explains it, in the seventh Verse. Having thus removed all jealousy and suspicion as to their present stedfastness, he doth more openly address himself to them; in giving them caution against the most dangerous and deceitful Errors. *Beware lest any man spoil you through Philosophy and vain deceit, after the Tradition of men, after the rudiments of the World, and not after Christ.* V. 8. Not as though there were the least prejudice to Christianity to be imagined by men's searching into the Works of God, or the Nature of Moral Actions, or the digesting our own thoughts or conceptions of things, which is all that is understood by true Philosophy; but that the Model of Religion which they were in so much danger of being deceived by, was made up, partly of Philosophical Precepts, and partly of Jewish Traditions and ritual Observations; by which the false Teachers endeavoured to corrupt and adulterate the Gospel of Christ. Accordingly in the following Discourse, the Apostle first disputes against the necessity of keeping the Ceremonies of the Law, now under the Gospel, and summs up the force of it, v. 17. *Which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.* And having thus dispatched the hardest Question about the Obligation of the Law of Moses, he enters upon the debate about other Inventions, which they endeavoured to recommend to Christians.

(1.) About the *Worshipping of Angels*, as *Mediators* between God and Men; which was an Opinion then generally received among the corrupters of Christianity, the *Gnosticks* and *Judaizing Christians*; who were not so vain in their imaginations, to believe them to be *supreme and independent Deities*; for this they utterly denied; owning *one only su-*

preme God the Father of all: but they thought access to him was to be had by the Mediation of Angels, and therefore they brought in the Worship of them. Baronius indeed denies, that the Gnosticks introduced any Worship of Angels; but therein he is justly confuted by some late Writers of the Roman Church. For Tertullian condemns the Gnosticks for a Magical Service of Angels; and Epiphanius saith, that their impure Sacrifices were supposed to be offer'd up by Principalities and Powers, to the supreme Father of all. Which doth evidently prove, that the Gnosticks did give Worship to Angels as Mediators. And although Baronius endeavours likewise to clear the Cerinthians from this guilt (lest the Church of Rome should be found to tread in their steps) because Cerinthus acknowledged one supreme Power above Angels, and because he had a bad Opinion of the Angel which gave the Law; yet, why might not they worship the Angels as Mediators between that supreme Power and them; and even that Angel which gave the Law as well as the rest, since they contended for the necessary observation of the Law? But besides, all the Judaizing Christians were not followers of Cerinthus, there being different Sects among them, as appears by Irenaeus, Epiphanius and others; and Baronius himself grants that the Pharisaical Jews of that and following Ages did Worship Angels as the Host of Heaven. And the Essens had their Angels of Prayer; and made their Prayers to the rising Sun, whom they looked on as on the rest of the Stars, as animated and intelligent Beings. And why the Judaizing Christians should not retain their former Superstitions, as well as their other Traditions and Observations, I do not understand. Especially, since Theodoret so expressly affirms, that those who then pleaded for the keeping of the Law brought in the Worship of Angels, which custom, he saith, continued a long time in Phrygia and Pisidia; and at last the Council of Laodicea, made a Canon against praying to Angels.

Those of the Church of Rome are so sensible of the force of this Testimony of Theodoret against their practice, that they are driven to desperate shifts to avoid it. Bellarmine saith, that he speaks against the Gnosticks; whereas Theodoret mentions only those who were for keeping the Law. Baronius saith in plain terms, Theodoret was mistaken, and that there were no such Hereticks then; but this is so gross, that Bellarmine and others contradict him in it. Others therefore say, that the Worship of Angels here spoken against, is the Worshipping of them as makers of the World. But that is more than St. Paul saith, for he speaks against that Worship which arises from Humility, and nothing so proper for that, as the Worshipping them as Mediators between God and us. Some think it is when Angels are preferred before Christ, which is likewise more than the Apostle saith; and they who chuse other Mediators, by whom God is more accessible by us; do prefer them in Use, though not in Dignity: Others, as the Jansenists in their New Testament, say it is, When Angels are set up as Mediators in opposition to Christ; but that cannot be the Apostles meaning; for then his great business would have been to have proved Christ to be the true Mediator, and not Angels; and if any Religious Worship of Angels had been agreeable with the Christian Doctrine, the Apostle would never have thus in general condemned it, but with such restrictions and limitations as made it to be evil. Therefore to avoid these difficulties, some conclude that by the Worship of Angels is understood such a Worship as was introduced by a pretended Revelation of Angels; but against this, we have the concurrent Testimony of St. Chrysostom, St. Hierome, St. Ambrose, Oecumenius, Theophylact, who all agree that

A. D. 60.  
n. 17.  
Christian.  
Lup. in Inter-  
tul. de prae-  
script. c. 37.  
Nat. Alex.  
Sac. 1. p.  
52. Tertull.  
de prae-  
script. c. 33  
Epiph. bar  
21. p. 58.  
Bar. ib. n.  
20.

n. 16.

Bell. de S.  
B. c. 20.

Jansen.  
Preface  
Ep. Aux.  
Coloff.

Chrys. in 1  
Hier. Algaf.  
Stoae,  
q. 10.

that it is to be understood of the *Worship given to Angels*. So impossible it is for those who either give themselves, or justifie and allow the giving by others, any *Religious Worship to Angels*, to escape falling under the Apostles censure, of being Seducers and corrupting the Gospel of Christ.

(2.) About *stricter Abstinence and greater Severity of Life*. For these Seducers gave out that the *Christian Churches* were yet very defective in this matter: And that there were several Societies of Men, both among the *Jews* and *Heathens*, which went very far beyond them: as the *Essens*, the *Pythagoreans*, the *Gymnosophists* and others; who far outstript the Christians in *Watchings* and *Fastings*, in the hard usage of their Bodies, and a total *abstinence from Wine and Flesh*, and other lawful Pleasures of Life. On which account these false Teachers represented the Christianity, as yet received in these Churches, as too soft and gentle an Institution, and not answering the Character that was given of it; but if they had a mind to set it off with advantage, it would be necessary for them to take in some of the strictest Precepts of those Societies, especially relating to Meats and Marriage, *Touch not, taste not, handle not*: which they magnified as the greatest Instances of true Religion, Self-denial, Humility, Mortification; without which they despised the Christian Institution as a mean and ordinary thing, requiring only the belief of some great things done and suffered by *Jesus Christ* in *Judea*, and the adhering thereto till Death, and doing those Offices of Humanity and Kindness to each other, and those Duties of Religion to *God*, which all Mankind thought fit and reasonable to be done.

But these pretended refiners of Christianity, were not contented with such common things; they must set up for something singular, and extraordinary; so *Epiphanius* observes of the *Gnosticks* in the beginning, *that they condemned Marriage, and abstained from Flesh, that under these pretences they might draw others into their snares.* And likewise of the *Ebionites*, one of the *Seets* of *Judaizing Christians*, *that they carefully abstained from all Flesh, and were every day Baptized, and celebrated the Eucharist only in Water, for fear of being defiled with the taste of Wine;* wherein they were followed by the *Encratite*, *Aquarii*, and several others, who affected something out of the way, as a badge of more than ordinary Sanctity. And there are scarce any of those who are mentioned as the Authors of great Mischief to the Church, but were remarkable for something of this Nature; as appears by *Marcion*, *Montanus*, *Manicheus*, *Severus*, and others. And which is observable, this sort of singularity prevailed no where more, than in these parts of *Phrygia*; where the *Encratite* very much encreased and continued so to do in the days of *Epiphanius*. So very little effect had this wise and timely caution, given by the Apostle in this place, upon those who were willing to be deceived in that, or following Generations.

*Cajetan* confesses himself to seek *what sort of Men those were the Apostle discourses against*; but it seems most probable to me, that they were a sort of *Judaizing Christians*, who endeavoured to introduce the *Customs* of the *Jewish Essens* into the Christian Church. For when *St. Paul* speaks of the *Jewish Customs* he mentions no other, but such as were in esteem among them; he takes no notice of *Sacrifices* which were disesteemed among them; *But let no man judge you in Meat*, which among them was only *Bread and Salt*; or *in Drink*, which was only *Water*; or *in respect of a Holy-day or New-Moon*, or the *Sabbath Days*; which as *Philo* relates, *they were great observers of.* And when he speaks of the *Customs* they

*Epiph. Hær.*  
23. p. 63.

*Hær. 30. p.*  
139.

*Epiph. Hær.*  
47. p. 339.

*Philo p.*  
876.

*Epiph. p.*  
42. V. 16.

*Philo p.*  
877. 899.

they would bring among the Christians, they were no other than such as were strictly observed among them, viz. *great abstinence, hard usage of their Bodies, and some Religious Rites with respect to Angels.* Concerning which the Apostle delivers his Judgment two ways.

1. He grants that these things have a *shew of Wisdom in them*; i. e. that they make so good an *appearance* to men, as is apt to raise an esteem of those persons in whom it is. First, Because they seem to flow from a *forwardness in Religion*, so I render *Ἐδελοθησκεία*, which we call *Will-Worship*; but that being a thing of an ill Name, doth not so well answer to the *shew of Wisdom*; for what *shew of Wisdom* is there in doing an ill thing? This is therefore a readiness of Mind to do any thing in Religion which men think pleasing to God, whether required by him or not. So *Hesychius* expounds *Ἐδελοθησκείαν* by *Ἐδελοσιῆσειαν*; and *Ἐδελήμιας* by *προεδύμιας*. And other Greek Words of a like composition, do imply no more than a *voluntary inclination*; as in *Ἐδελοδουλεία*, which *Plato* useth for a *service out of good Will, and free inclination*: *Ἐδελοπόνος* is the same with *φιλόπονος* and *φιλοκύνδυνος*; in *Xenophon*: And *St. Augustin* observes, that in his time, a Man that affected to be Rich, was called *Thelo-dives*, and he that desired to be thought Wise, *Thelo-sapiens*; so according to this Analogy, a Man that would be thought very Religious, would then have been called *Thelo-religiosus*; taking *Religiosus* in the sense of *Massurius Sabinus*, and not of *Nigidius Figulus*, i. e. in a good and not in a bad sense. And so *Ἐδελοθησκεία*, is a desire of appearing more *Religious* than ordinary; which is not a thing evil in it self, but depends on circumstances. The next is *καταπεινωθεῖσθαι*, *Humility*, a Vertue so graceful, so becoming Mankind, with a respect to God and to each other, that whatever makes a *Shew* of that, doth so of *Wisdom* too. The third is *καταφειδία σώματος*, *not sparing the Body*, but using it with hardshipp to keep it under, *ἐκ ἐπιμῆτιν πρὸς πλησιασίων τῆς σαρκός*. Which Words have such a hardness in their construction, as hath caused great variety of intrepertations; which I shall not repeat. That which seems most natural, is, that *Honour* implies a regard to the *Body*; and so it only explains what was meant by *καταφειδία*; the sense being, *not with any regard to the Flesh for its satisfaction*: which hath a farther appearance of *Wisdom*, not barely in the subjection of the *Body* to the *Mind*; but as it seems to argue a *Mind* so elevated above the *Body*, that it hath little or no regard to the necessities of it.

2. Notwithstanding all this fair *shew of Wisdom*, the *Apostle* doth really condemn these things as *not pleasing to God*, nor *suitable to the Christian Religion*. For,

(1.) He saith they have only a *shew of Wisdom*. *Λόγον, φησίν, ἔδυναυον ἔχει ἐκ ἀλήθειαν*, saith *St. Chrysostom*, who certainly understood the force of the Words; the *Shew*, saith he, *not the Power, therefore not the Truth of Wisdom*. *Imaginem rationis, humanaeque sapientiae*, saith *St. Jerom.* *Σχῆμα ἐκ ἀλήθειαν*, saith *Theodoret*; so that notwithstanding the fair *Shew* they make, they have no *real Wisdom* in them.

(2.) This new way of *Worship*, though it hath such a specious *shew of Devotion and Humility*; yet it reflects on the *Honour of Christ*, as *Mediator*; and therefore the *Apostle* charges the introducers of it, with *not holding the Head*. If the *Cerinthians* did advance the *Angels* above *Jesus Christ*, they were so much the more guilty; but if these *Judaizers* did only look on them as nearer and more agreeable *Mediators* to us, yet therein they brought a great disparagement upon him, whose Office it

was

was to be the *sole Mediator between God and Men*. Mankind was very excusable in comparison, for finding out other *Mediators*, before God had declared to the World that he had appointed his *Son* to be our only *Advocate* and *Intercessor*; but for those who own his Mediatorship, to make choice of others besides him, is to call in question the Wisdom of the Father, or the Sufficiency, Interest or Kindness of the Son. For if God hath appointed him for this end, and he be able to go through his work, and willing to help all that address themselves to him; what need to call in other assistants? yea, what a Dishonour is it for him to stand by, and Applications be made to them to do that Office, which he was appointed alone to discharge?

(3.) These new inventions though never so plausible, are a disparagement to the Gospel, as not containing sufficient, or at least not the most sublime and perfect directions for *Humility* and *Mortification*. For our *Blessed Saviour* was so far from being remarkable for these affected singularities, that the freedom and easiness of his conversation, was a great offence to those who understood little or nothing of Religion beyond these things. *The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a Man Gluttonous, and a Wine-bibber, a friend of Publicans* Mat. 12. 19. *and Sinners*. Not that he gave way to any thing like Luxury, or Intemperance, who was the most exact pattern of all true and real Virtues; but because they saw nothing extraordinary as to the severity of his Life in these Matters, they looked on him but as one of the common sort of men, making no appearance of more than usual Sanctity, as to eating and drinking. And when *John's Disciples* who were bred up with greater austerity, were really offended that Christ's Disciples did not fast as they did: our Saviour puts them off with a Parabolical Answer; *Can the Children of the Bride-chamber fast, as long as the Bridegroom is with them?* Mat. 9. 12, 13. which answer might puzzle them more, as not understanding why fasting should be inconsistent with his corporal Presence; yet to let them see that he did not look on *Fasting*, as a *Duty* unsuitable to his Religion, he tells them, the days would come, when his Disciples should have their times of Fasting. *But the Days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast*. So that it is not *Occasional* or *Anniversary Days of Fasting*, which are condemned here by the Apostle, as *Will-worship, or neglecting the Body*; but the imposing a new and severer course of Life upon Christians, as a way of greater perfection of *Mortification*, than what was required by Christ or his Apostles. This is that which the Apostle calls *being subject to ordinances*; and living after *the Commandments and Doctrines of Men*. V. 20. *Theodoret* observes that he doth not mean the Law by this, but the *unseasonable Doctrine of these Seducers*; and it is evident from the foregoing part of the 20th v. *Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the World, i. e. if ye are freed from the Yoke of the Law, what reason is there ye should submit to another, which depends only on the Authority and invention of Men? But what then? Doth St. Paul make it unlawful to submit to any Orders or Rites appointed by the Church in which we live?* By no means. For neither doth the Apostle speak of those who had lawful Authority, but of Seducers; nor doth he speak of things appointed merely for *Order and Decency*; but of such things which are supposed by the Imposers to have more of *true Perfection and Sanctity* in them: more *Humility and Mortification*; and consequently to be *more pleasing to God*, than bare obedience to the *Precepts of Christ and his Apostles*.

*Apostles.* Whoever introduce any such things into the Christian Church, and maintain any such opinions of them; are justly censured by the *Apostle* here, and fall under the condemnation of Seducers.

(4.) These things, whatsoever shew of *Wisdom* and *Humility* they make, are really the effects of *Pride* and *Folly*.

(1.) Of *Pride*: which appears,

V. 18. 1. By a great presumption of their great Skill and Knowledge in the Mysteries of Religion, and of what is most pleasing to God; *intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly put up by his fleshly mind.* So that here was a great outward appearance of *Humility* and *Mortification*; but within nothing but *Pride* and *Vanity*. It hath been long observed, that those who strive to exceed others in the outward shews and appearances of *Humility* and *neglect of the Body*, have been most liable to the Temptations of *Spiritual Pride*, i. e. to a high opinion of themselves, and a contempt of others; which they have manifested by an invincible stiffness in maintaining their own opinions; a readiness to impose them upon others; and impatience of contradiction from any.

2. By an affectation of greater *Humility*, than appears in others. These Seducers, we see, pretended to nothing more than *Humility*. Their *Worship of Angels* was from *Humility*; their *neglect of the Body* from *Humility* too: they made so much shew of it, as gave reason to suspect *Pride* lay at the bottom. For it is more real *Humility* to be contented to be thought *Proud* unjustly, than to labour for such an opinion of more than ordinary *Humility*, as these Seducers did.

(2.) Of *Folly*; in two things.

V. 22. *Vid. Theod. Ichnophyl.*  
 Matt. 15. 11, 17.  
 Rom. 14. 17, 18.  
 1. In placing the main of their Religion in things that would not bear the weight of it, which the *Apostle* intimates in those Words, *Which all are to perish with the using*, i. e. as the *Greek Interpreters* explain it, *the matters of eating and drinking are no such great things, that so much ado should be made about them.* For as our Saviour saith, *Not that which goeth into the Mouth defileth a Man; for it goeth into the Belly, and is cast out into the draught.* And therefore saith the *Apostle*, *The Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink, but Righteousness and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost; for he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of Men.*

2. In supposing the following their own *Inventions* to be more pleasing to God, than the observing his own Commands. For this seems to be at the bottom of all; these Seducers made no question, but they had found out ways much more pleasing to God, than those which were in common esteem and practice in the Christian Churches. So that which is called here *εὐθελοθεσκεία*, is by the *Latins* render'd *in Superstitione*, i. e. in an opinion of pleasing God by some particular Rites of their own; in making much of their Religion to lie in forbearing some things and doing others, which God never required, and are made no parts of the Christian Religion by Christ or his *Apostles*. So that here are two parts of the *Superstition* here spoken of.

1. Forbearing some things as *unlawful*, which God never made *unlawful* by any prohibition, *Touch not, tast not, handle not.* The root of their *Superstition* did not lie, as some imagine, *in supposing the things which they did forbear as in themselves abominable, as some Hereticks did;* but in an opinion, that God would be so much pleased with the mere forbearance of them, that those who design to please God, were bound to abstain from them, although he had never forbidden them. And there

there

there is a material difference between these three things. (1.) Abstaining from things as in themselves unlawful to be used. (2.) Preferring the Abstinence before the Use, on some particular Seasons and Occasions. (3.) Making the forbearance of them as unlawful (though not forbidden) as necessary to the pleasing of God. There were such who did utterly forbid the use of *Marriage* and *Meats*, of whom the Apostle speaks, 1 *Tim.* 4. 3. And the Christian Church, as *St. Augustin* observes, doth not fall under this censure of the Apostle, when in some cases it prefers Abstinence from both. *Ille prohibet, faith he, qui hoc malum esse dicit, non qui huic bono, aliud melius anteposit.* But yet there may be a *Superstitious Abstinence*, without that *Superstitious opinion*; or else the Christian Church had no reason to condemn the *Abstinence* of the *Montanists*, who, as *Tertullian* pleads for them, *utterly rejected that opinion.* Neither was it merely because *Montanus* wanted *Authority* to make *Laws* of *Abstinence*. But *Tertullian* acquaints us with other arguments against it, chiefly from the *unsuitableness of it to the design of Christianity*. And to impose such *Abstinence* as necessary to the pleasing God, is that which the *Church* condemned in *Montanus*; and the believing it is a *Superstitious opinion*; though of another sort from that which made the *Use* of them in it self *unlawful*. For they did it upon an extravagant fancy, that *no living Creatures were of God's making, but were produced by some other powers, in opposition to him*; as appears by the *Gnosticks*, the *Marcionists*, the *Manichees*, and the *Encratite*. But the same reason could not hold as to those *Judaizing Christians*, who believed the *World* and all living *Creatures* were produced by the power of God. For *Ireneus* faith, *That the Ebionites did hold that God was the Maker of the World*; and therein they differ'd from the *Cerinthians*, as well as in some other opinions, yet these *Ebionites* pretended to be *Christians*, and *universally abstained from Flesh*, as *Epiphanius* faith: not that they had any reason to account *Flesh* abominable; but they had learnt from the *Essens* to abstain from it, and thought it greater *Sanctity* so to do.

2. Their *Superstition* did lie in supposing that God would be mightily pleased with their doing somethings of their own invention, as the *Worship of Angels* was; which was so far from being commanded by God in the *Law of Moses*, that they had thence many arguments against it: but notwithstanding they thought there was so much of *Humility* and *Complement to God Almighty* in it, that he could not but be very much pleased with it. And when men lay a great weight of Religion upon *doing* or *forbearing things*, neither commanded nor forbidden by the *Law of God*, that is so far from being a pleasing *Worship of God*, that it deserves no other name but that of *Superstition* and *Will-worship*; as they do imply a *shew of Wisdom*, without the *Truth and Power of it*.

But here arises the main difficulty; "How shall we put a difference between what is pleasing to God, and what is not; or between true *Religion* and *Superstition*? For since the Apostle implies that some things may have a *shew of Wisdom* in them, *i. e.* may seem pleasing to God, which are not so; and other things may be more pleasing to God, which do not make such a *shew of Wisdom* to Men; it seems to be a matter of as great difficulty as concernment to us, to understand the just and true bounds between *Religious* and *Superstitious Worship*."

This is an enquiry of so great moment and consequence, for the easing our minds of many troublesome doubts and fears, and settling in them a true notion of *Religion*; that I shall from hence apply my self to the

consideration of the true difference between the *reasonable Worship of God, and Superstition.*

*Superstition* in the general, is nothing else but an *unpleasing Worship of God*; I do not speak of that *Worship*, which relates to a *false object*; which is more properly *Idolatry*; but when that *Worship* is ultimately referred to a *true Object*, as in the *Worship of Angels as Mediators*, then it is *Superstition* too; it being an undue way of giving *Worship* to the *true God*. I shall not trouble my self with an enquiry into the *Etymology* of the words in *Greek or Latin*, it being well observed by *Aquinas*, that in this matter we are not so much to observe the *Etymology of Superstition*, as the use of the *Word*. And that hath been different according to mens notions concerning *Religion*.

Aq. 2. 2.  
q. 92.

Tan. Fabr.  
No. p 29.

Leviath.  
ch. 5 ch. 11.

Those who believed no *God* at all, or at least no *Providence*, accounted all *Religion* to be nothing but *Superstition*. And it is a weak and silly Apology a late *Commentator on Lucretius* makes for his saying, *so much mischief hath been done by Religion*; by *Religion*, saith he, he meant *Superstition*; for he accounted all *Religion* to be nothing else but *Superstition*. And those in our Age, who can find no other difference between them; but that one is allowed, and the other not; or one is what we like, and the other what we dislike; do destroy any real difference between them; and make only *Religion* a *Superstition in fashion*; and *Superstition* a *Religion out of fashion*. Whereas if there be a *God* and *Providence*, there must be such a thing as *true Religion*: i. e. there ought to be some *Acts* in us agreeable to the *Conceptions* we have of the *Divine Nature*. For, His *Majesty* and *Power* requires our *Fear*; not an amazing, confounding, unaccountable *Fear*, arising from a perplexity and disorder of our imaginations; but a just, reasonable, prudent *Fear*, springing from our most serious thoughts and deepest consideration of things. For, if it be impossible for any thinking man to satisfy himself in the train of *Causes*, but he must come to this thought at last, that there is some *Cause*, whereof there is no former *Cause*, but is *Eternal*; which is that we call *God*; then it is impossible if this man pursues his own thoughts, but the first *Consequence* from hence will be, that if this *God* be the *first cause of all things*, his *Power and Majesty* is so great, as to command a due *Reverence* and *Fear* from us his *Creatures*. This is not such a *Fear* as *Men* have in a *storm*, or when a *sudden calamity* seizeth upon them, which makes them at their wits end, and to run they know not whither for present help; but it is a settled, calm, composed temper of mind; a *Fear* without consternation; an awe and *Reverence* of the *Divine Majesty*, without terrour and astonishment. For, as the mighty *Power* of *God* begets fear in us, so the infinite *Goodness* and *Wisdom* of *God*, not only keep up *Men's* minds from sinking into slavish *Fear*, and horrible *Despair*; but fills them with comfortable hopes, and a patient and humble *Trust* and *Confidence* in his never-failing *Providence*. And this is the *Nature of true Religion* in the minds of *Men*.

But because it tends to the honour of our *Maker*, and the encouraging one another to *Acts of Piety* and *Devotion*, that this inward sense of our *Minds* be expressed by such external *Actions* as are agreeable thereto, from thence came the necessity of the publick *Offices of Religion*, wherein we offer up our *Prayers* and *Praises* to the *Divine Majesty* in acknowledgment of our *Dependance* upon him for what we have, or are, or hope for. And there is nothing in all this, but what is highly just and reasonable, and this is *true natural Religion*.

But



But then we cannot deny, that there is too great a natural proneness in Mankind to *Superstition*. For, when men cannot shake off the apprehension of a Deity, and yet are conscious to themselves that they have offended him; the very thoughts of him prove so uneasy to them, that they would be glad to believe there were none at all, and give all the advantage to Atheistical Objections which a willing mind can do: And as *Plutarch* observes of Superstitious Men, *they would be Atheists if they durst*. But finding still an inward dissatisfaction, and an impossibility of rooting out the fears of a Deity; the next thing is, to think upon some ways to please him, and to mitigate his displeasure against them. And we can hardly imagine any thing so pompous and ceremonious, so mean and servile, so cruel and barbarous, so ridiculous and foppish, but Mankind have made use of it to atone the anger of their Gods. For the first effect of *Superstition*, on Men's minds, was; that they durst not make immediate *Applications* to the *Supreme Being*, as being too great and powerful for them: therefore they pitched on some inferiour Beings to mediate, and to offer up their Devotions and Sacrifices to him, whom they thought it too great presumption to approach. When thus *Superstition* in the most proper sense of *δεισιδαιμονία* had in a great measure supplanted *true Religion* in the World; then it proceeded to find out such ways and methods of Worship, as they thought would be most pleasing to these inferiour Deities. They erected Temples and Altars to them, and set out their Images with all the Art and Splendor they were capable of; and upon extraordinary Occasions they were carried with wonderful Pomp and Solemnity through the Streets, all Orders of Men attending them with Supplications and Prayers and costly Sacrifices to avert their Wrath and Displeasure. And they were not content with promiscuous Sacrifices, but they studied by all possible means to find out what *Sacrifices* would please them best; if they fancied it must be something very dear and precious to them, they stuck not at offering up their very Children to appease them; and contrived by loud Musick to stop their Ears from hearing the hideous cries of their Children while they were roasting in the flames. And in their ordinary Sacrifices, they were extremely scrupulous, lest any spot or blemish, or number, or unfit season, or so much as colour should be displeasing to the Gods they offered them to: some must have white and uneven, others black and even Sacrifices; some must have their Sacrifices offered at the rising, some at the setting of the Sun; some must have one sort of Beasts, and some another; and some no less than Man's flesh would satisfy; which inhumane Sacrifices on some occasions, did almost universally obtain, before the Christian Religion prevailed in the World. But again, other Deities were presumed to be so nice and squeamish, that nothing was to be offered them but Milk, and Wine, and Honey, and some Fruits of the Earth. It were infinite to relate the Rites and Customs of their Sacrifices, and all the ways they used to please their Gods, and to find out whether they were pleased or not; by the posture, the tongue, the entrails of their Beasts; by the flying of Birds, the feeding of Chickens, the falling of a staff, the holes of a sieve, &c. and innumerable ways of Divination, by which they flatter'd themselves that they understood the good Will and Pleasure of their Gods, which did not so much satisfy their curiosity, as fill them with perpetual fears, and oppress them with the horrible Bondage of *Superstition*; which exalted almost

almost every thing to the honour of a Deity, and made themselves miserable by seeking to please them.

But although this were the deplorable state of Mankind, forsaken of God and left to their own inventions; yet such is the weakness and folly of Men, that when God himself had given a *Law* to the *Israelites* to regulate their Worship, with as much condescension to their weakness, as the Wisdom of his Law would permit; yet so great was the Witchcraft of *Superstition*, that they were always almost hankering after the *Dotage* of their neighbour Nations. And although they often smarted severely for it; yet the rod was no sooner off, but they were ready to return to their former *Superstitious vanities*, and were so obstinately bent upon them, that nothing could move them; not their former experience; not the unreasonableness of the thing; not the terrible denunciations of God's heavy judgments against them; till at last, when there was no remedy, the whole People were carried into Captivity; from whence the greatest part never returned, and their very memory is lost by a mixture with other Nations. Those who returned, have been so wise ever since, as to abhor that provoking sin of *Idolatri*; which their Ancestors suffered so much for: but by degrees they fell into other kinds of *Superstitions*. For it was thought a mean thing among them to keep to the Law; but the *Traditions* of their *Elders* were looked upon as precious things; and happy was the Man that was strictest in the observance of them. Their frequent Washings, their additional Fastings and Prayers, their Garments, their Postures, their very Looks had such an appearance of Sanctity above other Mens; that a man who kept only to the Law, was of no regard or esteem for Piety and Devotion.

This was the *State of Religion* among the Jews when Christ appeared, who laid open the foppery and hypocrisy of these great pretenders to extraordinary Sanctity. He directed men to the love of God and their Neighbours, as the main substantial parts of true Religion. And next to his making a propitiation for the sins of Mankind by the Sacrifice of himself, his great end was to restore true Religion to the World, which had been so long buried under the heap of *Superstitions*. And there needed so great an Authority as his was, to assure Mankind, that nothing was so pleasing and acceptable to God, as unaffected Piety, and universal Goodness; which comprehends under it all the Duties of Temperance, Righteousness and Charity. And it is one great Argument of the Providence of God watching over his Church, that he hath caused the Discourses of our *Blessed Saviour* to be preserved by the *Writings* of the *Evangelists*; without which in all likelihood, the Christian Religion had been long since lost in the World. For the *Jewish Christians*, who corrupted Christianity, had represented St. Peter so favourable to them; and so misrepresented St. Paul; that unless Christ's Doctrine had been preserved in his own words, and that by the concurrent Testimony of different Writers, the Christian Religion had preserved little more than its name in the World.

And yet with all this advantage, such was still the fondness of Mankind for their own *Inventions*, that even under the Apostles eyes, most of the Churches began to be tainted with these corruptions; partly by the *Judaizing Christians*; and partly by the followers of *Simon and Menander*. But they all agreed in some thing new and mysterious, and more pleasing to God, than the dull and common way of *Faith and Obedience*. After the *Apostles* decease, the corruptions still multiplied, and any

any new pretence to *Revelations* and *Mysterics*, especially being joined with greater *Abstinence* and *Severity of Life*, took wonderfully among weak and injudicious Christians, and made them apt to despise the *Churches Devotions*, as too cold and flat, and not having that *Life and Spirit*, that *Strictness* and *Austerity* which appeared among the new pretenders. What disturbance on this account did the Spirit of *Montanus* give to the Churches of *Phrygia*, *Galatia*, and *Cappadocia*? the meer pretence to *Revelation* had never done it, had it not been for the stricter *Laws of Fasting* and *Mortification*, and greater *Severity of Discipline* than was used in the *Catholick Church*: It was this which made *Tertullian* swallow the bait he had despised before; and the force of all his Arguments against the Church is, we are stricter than you. But notwithstanding all these pretences, the Christian Church still kept it self within its bounds, making nothing necessary to Salvation, but what Christ and his Apostles had made so; yet recommending the *Practice of Fasting*, as there were just *Occasions*, especially before the great solemnity of *Easter*; wherein both the *Sacraments* were administered with more than ordinary *Devotion*, and the *Penitents* reconciled to the *Communion* of the Church.

If we look at this day into the *State* of the *Christian World*; how great a part of it is relapsed into almost *Heathen Superstitions*, in the *Worship of Images*, and *Saints*, and *Angels* as *Mediators*? and no great difference in the outward Solemnities and Processions, save that their *Sacrifices* are turned into a *Consecrated Wafer*, which is carried in *Procession*, as the *Heathen Gods* were wont to be. It is true, there are great pretences to *Will-worship*, and *Humility*, and *neglecting the Body* in several *Orders* of Men; and those are looked on as ways of *greater perfection*, than living in the *World*, and doing good in it. Which we have no reason to think agreeable to the *Doctrine of Christ* or our *Apostle* here. But where there is not only *Sanctity* and *Merit*, placed in such observations, but *Supererogation* too, they flatly contradict *St. Paul*; for if that be true, these things have far more than *the shew of Wisdom*; for what wiser thing can any man do, than not only to provide for his own *Salvation*, but for others too?

In the *Eastern Churches*, the best part, I fear, of their remaining *Christianity*, lies in the strict observing the *Fasts* and *Feasts* of the *Church*. They mightily despise the *Fasting* practised in the *Roman Church*, as not deserving the name of *Fasting*, because they end it at noon, and allow *Wine* and *Fish* for their repasts. Although it is said \* that of late the *Greeks* break the strict *Fast* at noon; but in *St. Chrysostom* and *St. Basil's* time they accounted it *no Fast* wherein they did not totally abstain till night. The more *Eastern Christians* allow neither *Fish*, nor *Wine*, nor *Oyl* in their *Lents*, and they keep more in the *Year* than the *Latin Church* †.

pic. l. 3. c. 6. n. 81. Thom. à Jesu de Convers. omnium Gent. l. 7. c. 18. Cotovite. Itiner. Hierosolymit. & Syriac. p. 207. Franc. Quaresm. Elucid. Torræ. Sancta l. 1. c. 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58. Eustrat. Zialouski de Eccles. Orient. Græc. p. 39. Metroph. Critopul. c. 18. Haud scio, inquit Methodius Græcus (apud Mich. Nau, in Eccles. Græca effigie Dial. 13.) unde factum sit ut vos Latini à reliquis Christianorum Nationibus, sic in jejunando recesseritis, ut nulla vobis nè Maronitana quidem, qua tota vestra est, consentiat. jejunatis sabbato, feriâ. 4. Non abstineteis ab esu Carniam; pisces, & quibusdam in locis, lacticia, quadragesimali tempore comeditis, solutis meridiæ jejunium, &c.

\* Mich. Nau.  
Eccles. Græc.  
Effig. p. 260.  
Bas. hom. de  
jejun. Chry.  
hom. 6. ad  
Pop. An-  
tioch.  
† V. Job.  
Ludolph.  
Hist. Esbio.

In the *Church of England*, which approacheth nearest of any in the *World* to the *Primitive Church*, the *Duty of Fasting* is recommended upon its true *Grounds*, not as though there were any peculiar *Sanctity* or *Merit* in it, which are *Superstitious Conceits*, but to keep the *Body*  
in

in Subjection to the Spirit. It lays no snares upon the *Consciences* of Men; it gives no Countenance to hypocritical pretences to *Fasting*; but it sets before us the example and practice of the *Primitive Church*; and according to the Temper and Moderation then used, leaves persons to judge of their own strength, occasions, times, manner and degrees of *Fasting*; excepting the *Fast on Good-Friday* or the true *Antepaschal Fast* (which some kept longer than others) which *Tertullian* saith, was universally observed by the *Christian Church*, as a necessary *Fast*, and had been so from the *Apostles times*; but as to other times a greater liberty was allowed.

*Prudent.* 1. *Cath. hym. post jejun. V. Tert. de jejun.* c. 2. 13. *Hier. ep.* 54. *ad Marcel. Aug. c. Faust. Manich.* l. 30. c. 5. *ad Casul. Ep.* 86. *Epip. in expos. fidei Cath.* n. 23. *Socr.* l. 5. c. 22. *Vistor. Antioch. in Marc.* 2. *Cassian. Coll.* 21. c. 30.

*Laxus ac liber modus abstinendi  
Ponitur cunctis; neque nos severus  
Terror impellit; sua quemque cogit  
Velle Potestas.*

Yet even *this Church*, that is so wise, so moderate, cannot escape the charge of *Will-worship and Superstition*, for the *Orders* that are observed in it. But wherein is it that we are liable to this charge? Do we make the *Orders* of the *Church* any parts of our *Religion*? Or think that God is any otherwise displeas'd with others violation of them, than as it argues a froward, restless, unpeaceable Spirit? But what is it then? God, say they, hath not commanded these things, therefore they are *Will-worship and Superstition*.

This is an *Objection*, which for the honour of our *Church*, I must remove, before I proceed to what remains. The true Case among us is this, the *Church* appoints such *Orders* to be observed in it, which have no express command in *Scripture*; some utterly refuse them as *unlawfull*, though no where forbidden in *Scripture*; the Question is, Whether of these two sorts, those who practise according to these *Orders*, or those who utterly refuse, are liable to the charge of *Will-worship and Superstition*?

To clear this, we must state the notion of *Will-worship and Superstition* as they are here used by the *Apostle*, and then apply it to the present Case.

(1.) *Will-worship* I have shew'd, is nothing but a forwardness to do something that relates to the pleasing of God; and is said by the *Apostle* to have a shew of *Wisdom*, and therefore can be no more evil in it self, than *Humility*, or neglecting the *Body*; but whether it be good or evil is to be determin'd by circumstances.

(2.) Those circumstances which make it ill are, when men make those things a part of their *Religion*, which God hath neither commanded nor forbidden; and think God is pleas'd with their meer doing or abstaining from doing them, and this is true *Superstition*. For there are two things necessary to the *Notion* of it.

1. That the matter about which it is conversant relate to the pleasing of God. *Superstition* I grant, hath been taken by *Plutarch* and others from him, for a dreadful apprehension of the *Deity*; but that is rather the foundation of *Superstition*, than the definition of it. For a *Superstitious Man* doth both think God to be angry without just cause, and beyond reason; and to be pleas'd again without reason. If he thought God inexorable upon his Displeasure, he must presently despair; but because he thinks he may be easily pleas'd again, therefore he bethinks himself

himself in what way he may best do it ; and so devises several ways of his own, and useth any means suggested by others, though never so unreasonable in themselves, in hopes to please God by them. Thence *Plutarch* mentions such Mens, ἀλλοκότους προσκυνήσεις, *uncouth ways of Worship* ; and he observes that at the same time, κολακεύουσιν ἢ λοιδοροῦσιν, *they flatter and reproach God* ; they think unworthily of him, as of one that is μὲν εὐλαβῆσθαι, *very easily provoked* ; and yet that he is εὐμετέωρος, *as easily changed* ; and that is the reason why a Superstitious fear puts men upon finding out any ways and methods to please him, though never so unreasonable ; for they looking upon God as a peevish, angry, humourfome Being, they have no certain Rule to judge what will please him, and therefore follow their own fancy and imagination about it.

2. That they be mistaken in their judgment concerning what they believe to be pleasing to God, that is, that they judge that to be so, which really is not. So *Superstition* is an excess or over-doing in the matter of *Worship* ; that which doth *modum legitimum cultus superflare & excedere*, saith *Vossius* ; which *Etymology* he thinks much better than any other. *Cicero* saith, that Religion is *pius cultus*, *Superstition timor inanis Deorum*, i. e. one is a reasonable, the other an unreasonable *Worship*. So *A. Gellius* saith, it is *inepta & importuna Religio* ; a foolish and troublesome Religion. *Festus* applies it to those things which are done, *præter morem Civitatis* ; against the Custom prescribed by Law. As those of the *Church of Rome* do, to things done against the commands of the *Church* : and so not fasting upon *Saturdays*, and fasting upon *Sundays* are both *Superstitious* in their account ; but all the trumpery of the *Mas*s and follies of their *Worship* are by no means *Superstitious*, because required by the *Church*. Which however helps us with a good argument to prove that the *Worship of Images*, and *Saints*, and *Angels* are required by their *Church* ; or else by their own confession they must be *Superstitious*. But their *Divines* do all agree with *Aquinas*, that men may be guilty of *Superstition in the Worship of the true God* ; i. e. when men make choice of something unfit or unreasonable to express their *Worship of God*. And *Suarez* quotes *Cajetan*, as allowing this Text to be extended to all *Superstitious Worship not founded in right reason*. And *Cajetan* upon the place saith, that although they have a shew of *Wisdom* ; yet not in any honour, saith he, i. e. they deserve no esteem, being only for the satisfying of the flesh : i. e. of a carnal desire as to these external observations.

(3.) The *Superstition* here condemned, lay in the supposing God to be pleased with the forbearance of lawfull things ; touch not, taste not, handle not. Which if we understand either of *Meats* or *Marriage*, was a forbearance of things in themselves lawfull ; but they supposed God would be far better pleased with their forbearance of them. I do not say, it is *Superstition* for any man to abstain from doing what he apprehends to be unlawfull by vertue of general command : For that is a *Moral Duty*, and obedience to those places of *Scripture* which bid us abstain from all kind and appearance of evil. But yet it is plain here was a *Negative Superstition* in the forbearance of lawfull things : And so it was in the dispute between *Christ* and the *Pharisees about healing on the Sabbath-day* ; they thought it unlawfull : *Christ* declares it to be lawfull to do good on the *Sabbath-days*. Here was no positive observance on the *Pharisees* part ; Yet here was *Superstition* in them ; and therefore

therefore the true notion of *Superstition* doth extend to the forbearance of things in themselves lawfull as displeasing to God.

But how shall we know, when such a forbearance is *Superstitious*.

By these Rules:

*Fresh Suit,*  
P. 101.

1. If such a forbearance be thought to bring some *special honour* to God. For then, even Dr. *Ames* himself grants it to be *Superstition*, to abstain from lawfull things though accounted unlawfull by the Persons who abstain; when some singular service and honour is by that abstinence intended: For then he grants it to be a kind of *Ceremonious Worship*. The question then is, when this case happens; for our Abstinence from *Papish* or *Mahumetan Superstitions*, is not any special Act of *Service*, or *Honour* to God. But if we lived where those Acts of *Worship* were required by lawfull Authority; and we refused to comply with them, that would be a special Act of *Honour* and *Worship* to God; it being a declaration of our Minds, that we thought God dishonoured by such Acts, and therefore durst not comply with them. It was once a great Question among the *Papists*, whether they might lawfully come to our Churches, or not; and if not to our Prayers and Sacraments, yet to our Sermons, to avoid the severe Penalties of the Laws. And after great debate both by a *Committee* of the *Council of Trent*, and afterwards at *Rome*; it was resolved in the *Negative*, upon this Reason, because in our Circumstances, it was *signum distinctivum cultus*, a mark of distinction as to *Religious Worship*, and therefore it was an Act of special honour and service to God to forbear. To abstain from pouring out Wine, and throwing Incense in the fire, is in it self no Act of *Worship*; but when the Heathen Emperors commanded the Christians to do it, in token of compliance with their Religion; their abstaining then from it, was a singular Act of *Worship* to God. So in the present Case, when men are required by lawfull Authority, to do things which in themselves are lawfull, to testify their union and conjunction with us in Religion; their refusal in this Case is a special Act of *Worship*; and being without Ground, is nothing else but *Superstition*.

2. When men value and esteem themselves as more holy and more in the favour of God on the account of such forbearance. As the *Pharisees* did on the account of their *Traditions*, who believed that God had no such people upon earth as they were; and despised others who were far nearer to the Kingdom of God than themselves, as mere *Publicans* and *Sinners*. And it is very natural to Mankind to set a great value upon themselves, for the sake of their affected singularities in Religion; and in a transport of pride and vanity, to tell God himself, as the *Pharisee* did, *That they are not like other Men*: But this is a certain sign, whatsoever they pretend, that they look on the forbearance of the things which others do, as a part of *Holiness*; and if they do so, it is undoubtedly *Superstition*. For, on this ground we charge the *Papists* with *Superstition* in their *Ceremonies*, because they place holiness in them. It is true, they say they are the Instruments to convey some degrees of holiness to them; but this makes no material difference; for those who account themselves more in God's esteem for the sake of such things, do attribute some real efficacy to such distinctive Characters of themselves, as to the obtaining the favour of God.

3. When they forbear necessary Duties of Religion rather than comply with others in lawfull things, as Communion with the Church  
they

they live in, in Prayers and Sacraments: which cannot be denied to be necessary Duties; but if men resolve rather to forbear these, than to join in such Ceremonies and Prayers as do accompany the performance of them, it is a sign they prefer the following their own imaginations before the joining in Communion with the Church in the most unquestionable Duties of Religion: As in the Case of the *Encratice* of old, who thought it unlawful to taste of Wine; and therefore refused to communicate in the Eucharist, unless they might have it in Water alone. Was not this a great *Superstition* in them, rather to forbear communicating with the Church, than to observe their own fancies in what they thought most pleasing to God, as to the manner of doing it?

Now to apply this to our own Case.

We are often blamed for laying too great weight on the *Ceremonies* of this *Church*. But certainly, never any *Church* laid less weight upon its own Orders, supposing that it believes them to be just and reasonable. It places no *holiness*, no *merit*, no *efficacy* in them, as to the obtaining the Grace and Favour of God: It expects obedience only for *Order* and *Peace-sake*; It hath taken great care by *Prefaces* and *Canons* and *Rubrics*, to prevent any misinterpretation of its intention and design.

But on the other side, those who dissent from us, lay so great weight on their scruples, that they will rather hazard breaking a *Church* in pieces, ruining our Religion by our differences, losing all the benefit of Communion with a *Church*, whose Doctrine they approve in all the Duties of religious Worship, than they will yield to the allowance of those circumstances of our Communion which our *Church* requires. And now on which side the charge of *Superstition* more justly lies, let all that are impartial judge.

So much I thought necessary on this *Occasion* to speak, in vindication of our *Church* from this common imputation of *Superstition*, by those who so little understand what it means.

Nothing now remains, but to make *Application* of all to our selves: You see how much mischief *the shew of Wisdom* was like to do in the *Apostolical Churches*; let us all have a care of being deceived by it. It was long since observed by *Menander*, *That things which were like Truth were more easily believed by the generality of Mankind, than Truth it self.* So I am afraid it is about Religion, which is the *Wisdom* here spoken of, that which makes a great *shew* of it to the World, is more apt to prevail among persons of weak and well disposed Minds than true *Wisdom*. For *the shew of Wisdom* strikes more upon the fancy and inclination of such Persons, than sober, calm and well-weighed Religion; which seems dull and flat to those who have more warmth and zeal than judgment and discretion. And I do not at all question, but many of the corruptions of the Christian Church came in, from an apprehended necessity of complying with the heat of some over zealous People; who were not contented with the plain and excellent Religion of Jesus Christ; but they must, as they thought, heighten and improve it, till they had mixed with it the freaks of *Enthusiasm*, or the dotages of *Superstition*.

Τὸ πῶτον ἰσχυρὸν τὴν ἀληθείαν ἔχει  
Ἐπίστευσε μισθῶ, καὶ πῶτον ἠπίεσαν ὄχλοι.  
M. ti.

In the *Church* of *Rome* there is in many things a *shew of Wisdom*, in *Will-worship* and *Humility*, and neglecting the *Body*; And in some of our *Sects*, that seem to abhor *Will-worship* so much, that for fear of it they will not give civil respect to men; yet they pretend to *shew of Wisdom*

in Humility and neglecting the Body, but after a different manner: others have a *shew of Wisdom* too in a wonderful, I had almost said, *superstitious* zeal, against what they call *Will-worship* and *Superstition*. But what is to be done in this Case? How shall we avoid being led aside by such a *shew of Wisdom*, on every side? I shall only lay down some Directions, and so conclude.

(1.) Fix a true Notion of God and the Christian Religion in your minds. If you judge aright of the Divine Nature, it will ease your minds of many uneasie thoughts, troublesome fears and superstitious fancies. He is not capable of being flattered or deceived by us; God is neither taken with outward appearances, nor is he pleased with any thing we do, merely because it is displeasing to our selves, *The righteous God loveth righteousness*; and he is pleased best with the innocency, integrity and holiness of our hearts and lives. And for the Christian Religion, take not your Notion of it from the different and uncertain opinions of Men, but from the Doctrines of Christ and his Apostles. Men do not read the Scriptures as they ought to do, with a design to know their Religion by them; but to justify what they take to be Religion from them. One would think it were impossible for any one that considered the Sayings of Christ or his Apostles, to place his Religion in being for or against any particular Modes or Ceremonies of Worship; whereby he may so easily see that it lies chiefly in an excellent temper of mind, holy, spiritual, humble, calm, peaceable, charitable, and a suitableness of action to this temper. This is so plain and easie to be understood, that he must read the New Testament with a very ill mind, that doth not find it out. And if you have settled this Notion of true Religion, it will be a continual Touchstone about you to judge of all Pretenders.

(2.) Set not an equal value on things that are good in order to other things, that you do upon things that are good in themselves. For the one are but the Instruments of Religion, the other are properly the Duties of it. *Mich. 6.8. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, viz. to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.* And this was spoken when very costly Sacrifices were offered instead of it; no less than thousands, and ten thousands; yea the firstborn, and the fruit of their Bodies. And therefore God sets a high value on these Duties, and so ought we. No one that hath any sense of Religion can despise the immediate Duties of Divine Worship; it being a good Saying of *Pythagoras*, mention'd by *Cicero* and *Plutarch*, that we are never better than when we approach to God; or, as *Cicero* expresses it, when we do *rebus Divinis operam dare*, are employed in the Duties of Divine Worship: But yet to do good is better than Sacrifice, and to forgive an injury than the fat of Rams. It is a wise Observation of *Maimonides*, That the intention of the Law of God is to keep men within the just Bounds of Vertue; but when men found a stronger inclination to one extreme than to another, they made use of remedies proper to reduce themselves from that extreme, by great severities towards themselves, by Watchings and extraordinary Fastings, and other hardships: but when Fools saw Wise men do these things, they imagined presently that there was an excellency in the things themselves, and that if they did the same things, they should pass for very good men, and be highly in the favour of God. Which, saith he, is just like an ignorant Fellow, who observing the Physicians prescribing Physick to his Patients, and forbidding eating to them,

*Plutarch  
de Superst.  
Cic. de Legib. l. 2. c. 5.*

*Porta M. f. p. 201.*



them, and finding them to recover upon it, should presently conclude, that surely it is the best way to live upon Scammony and Aloes, and such like, and so keep himself with the same strictness that was prescribed to the Sick; which instead of preventing a Disease, would certainly bring one: so, saith he; do those who use the remedies of diseased minds in a state of health, they spoil a good constitution of their souls, and make it uneasy and troublesome.

(3.) Judge of mens pretences, not by their outward *shew* and *appearance*, but by the *Spirit* and *Temper* that goes along with them. This was the course the Apostle here took; he regarded not their *shew of Wisdom* and great *appearance of Humility* and *Mortification*; but he pursued these things to their Fountain-Head, and there he found nothing but *spiritual pride, and vanity of mind*. We must not judge easily nor rashly Ver. 18. concerning this; but where the evidence is notorious, we have great reason to slight and contemn the most sanctimonious appearance, *i. e.* if there be great uncharitableness and censoriousness towards all who do not comply with them; great scorn and contempt of all other ways but their own; great malice and spight against all who go about to oppose them; where these are, whether in the *Church of Rome*, or elsewhere, whatever the *shew of wisdom* be, this *wisdom descendeth not from above, but is* Jam. 3. 15. *earthly, sensual, devilish*. But the *Wisdom that is from above, is first pure,* Ver. 17. *then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisie.*

# SERMON XXI.

Preached before the

# K I N G.

February 15, 168<sup>3</sup><sub>4</sub>.

JOB XXIII. 15.

*When I consider, I am afraid of him.*

**T**Hese Words were spoken by *Job*; not in his flourishing and prosperous state, when that extraordinary Character was given of him, *That there was none like him in the Earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil*; but after the Devil was permitted to try that malicious Experiment upon him, *viz.* whether the changing his outward condition, would not alter the inward disposition of his mind, as to God and Religion. For he suggested, that nothing but Interest made him so Religious, that all his Piety and Devotion was owing to the wonderful Blessings of God upon him; and if these were once removed, he would fly out into so much impatience as to curse God to his face; *i. e.* to speak evil of his Providence, and renounce his service. And this temptation prevailed so far on *Job's* Wife, that she became an Instrument to carry on the Devil's design, when she said to him, *Dost thou still retain thy integrity? Curse God and die*: As though she had said, "You see what all your Religion is now come to, and what a condition the Providence of God, on which you trusted so much, hath brought you to; let them serve God, that have ease and plenty, you have nothing left to do now, but in spite of Providence, to put an end to such a miserable life: But as it was observed of the old Heathen Oracles, that they had often a true meaning in them, but it was commonly misapplied (the Devils own knowledge of future events being but probable and conjectural) so here, it was a shrewd guess that so sudden a change would have such an effect upon some person concerned in it: But he was very much mistaken as to *Job*; who behaved himself with admirable patience and submission to the Will of God, under all his severe afflictions; infomuch, that he did

not

Job 1. 8.  
2. 3.

1. 9.

v. 11.

Job 2. 9.

not suffer an indecent expression to come from him, with respect to God and his Providence: *In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God* Job i. 22. *foolishly.* 2. 10.

Which was no doubt a great disappointment to the Devil, who made account he should by *Job's* impatience have given a terrible blow to Religion, by making the World believe, that it was nothing but a grave pretence of some mens seeming to be better than their Neighbours. For if a man of so much Piety, as *Job* was esteemed, should no sooner be pinched himself with affliction, but he would be quarrelling at God's management of things, the Devil would have inferred, that he did plainly discover, how little influence Religion had upon the minds of those, who made the greatest shew of it.

This had been a very dangerous snare in that Age, to the rest of Mankind, among whom the example of so great a Person, as *Job* was in the parts of *Arabia* where he lived (as appears by the *Sabeans* and *Chaldeans* his unkind Neighbours) did give a mighty reputation to the practice of Religion, especially among such a wild and ungoverned People as the *Arabs* were. And in truth, the World is never so kind to Religion, to give a fair interpretation of the failings of those who pretend to it; but how unreasonable soever it be, they will make Religion bear the blame of all their miscarriages who wear its livery. And *Job* himself tells us, there were such profane Persons then in the World, who despised and contemned all Religion, as a vain, impertinent, insignificant thing, *Therefore they say unto God; Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him? And what profit shall we have if we pray unto him? i. e.* they understood or valued nothing but what made for their present interest; and they were content to let God alone with the disposal of another World, so they might secure this to themselves. But it was not only then a reasonable vindication of Religion, that *Job* behaved himself with so much patience under his great Calamities; but it continues so to be as long as the memory of his sufferings remains, which hath lasted for so many Ages, that some think the Book of *Job* the oldest Book in the World; (not in the supposed translation into Hebrew; but in the Original *Arabic* or *Syriac*) and is now like to be preserved, as long as the Christian Church endures; against which *the Gates of Hell will never be able to prevail.* 17. 14, 15.

But notwithstanding the general evenness of *Job's* temper, and his quiet submission to Divine Providence, there were two things which touched him more sensibly than all the other circumstances of his afflictions; and those were,

(1.) That God should seem so much displeas'd with him, as to single him out *as a mark to shoot at*, when he was not conscious to himself of any such impiety to deserve it, according to the common method of his Providence.

(2.) That his Friends should call in question his sincerity in Religion, and suspect him guilty of Hypocrisy and secret Impiety; because they concluded that such signal calamities could hardly fall upon any man, that was not guilty of some such great crime towards God.

These were a trial of *Job's* patience indeed; that those from whom he expected the greatest comfort, should prove his worst Enemies; for if God were angry, who could stand before him? and if he were false in his Religion, how could he expect he should be his Friend? But in answer

swer to both these, he owns his fear of God's displeasure, and denies the charge as to his secret Hypocrisie, and both in these few words of the Text, *When I consider, I am afraid of him.*

These words may be understood,

I. With respect to his apprehension of God's displeasure against him, *Therefore am I troubled at his presence,* saith he immediately before; not as though *Job* were like those *Eliphaz* speaks of in the foregoing Chapter, *which said unto God, Depart from us,* or that he endeavoured as profane Persons do, to keep God out of his thoughts as much as he could: for what could *Job* have done under all his Troubles but for God's presence to support him? And therefore he declares his firm resolution never to let go his confidence in God whatever became of him; *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. He also shall be my salvation; for an hypocrite shall not come before him.* But the Presence which troubled him, was the great appearance of God's displeasure; of which again he speaks, *v. 24. For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me.* As though he had said, "All other considerations make no deep impression upon my mind; but I am no more able to bear up under the sense of God's anger, than the Wax is to forbear melting before the Fire. And from this sense of his own utter inability to stand before the Power of the Almighty, he elsewhere argues thus with him; *Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? And wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?* Man being as unable to resist the Divine Power, as a leaf is to stand before a tempestuous Wind, or the dry Stubble to stop the rage of a consuming Fire.

But here are two things to be resolved to make this matter clear before I proceed;

(1.) What it was made *Job* so afraid of God *when he considered,* seeing he insists so much upon his own Integrity?

(2.) What apprehensions then ought we to have of God in our minds, when such a one as *Job* said, *When I consider, I am afraid of him.*

(1.) What it was made *Job* so apprehensive of God's anger that *he was afraid of him,* when he pleads so much for his own Integrity towards God and Man? Doth not this seem to lessen the comfort and satisfaction of a good Conscience, when such a one as *Job was afraid of God?* For, from whence comes all the peace of a good Conscience, but from him? And what content can there be from him, the very thoughts of whom make us afraid? To that I answer,

(1.) Mankind ought always to preserve an humble and awful apprehension of God in their mind. And that from the sense of the infinite distance between God and us; as he is our Maker, and we are his Creatures; as he is our Benefactor, and we his Dependents; as he is our supreme Lord, and we his Subjects; as he infinitely exceeds us in all the Perfections of his Nature. For, what are our shallow and dark and confused conceptions of things, to his Divine Wisdom? By which he comprehends all the differences of times at one view; and all the Reasons and Connexions and Possibilities of things are *open and naked before him.*

What is all the power of Mankind, if it were gathered into one, in comparison with that Divine Power, which gave a Being to the World, when it was not; and rules, and governs, and orders all things in it, with greater ease than we can move a Finger? It is by that, *God hath spread out the Skies, and balanced the Clouds, and garnished the Heavens, and divided the Sea, and hanged the Earth upon nothing;* as it is elegantly set

set forth in this Book of *Job*. And therefore as *Job* saith to his Friends, <sup>13. 11.</sup> *Shall not his excellency make you afraid, and his dread fall upon you?* For <sup>37. 22.</sup> as *Elibu* speaks, *With God is terrible Majesty: and therefore when we consider, we have reason to be afraid of him.*

(2.) The best of Mankind have guilt enough upon them to make them apprehend God's displeasure under great afflictions. *Job's* Friends insist much upon this, that God may see just cause to lay great punishments upon Men, although they may not see it in themselves. For, <sup>4. 18.</sup> *if he charges his Angels with folly, as Eliphaz speaks, and the Heavens are* <sup>15. 15, 16.</sup> *not clean in his sight; How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water? i. e. whose natural propensity to evil, is like that of the thirsty Traveller to drink of the Brook that he meets in his way. But suppose some to have much greater care to restrain their desires than others; yet saith he, What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? i. e. to such a degree as not to deserve afflictions from God. And after all the protestations *Job* makes of his Integrity, he confesses that there is so much natural and contracted impurity in Mankind, that God may justly cast them into the Furnace to purge and refine them. Who can bring a clean <sup>Job 14. 4.</sup> *thing out of an unclean? not one. And, I have sinned, what shall I do unto* <sup>7. 20.</sup> *thee, O thou preserver of men? For, thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me possess the iniquities of my youth.* He could not deny but he had sinned enough to deserve God's displeasure: but according to the usual method of Providence, he could not but think his Case very hard, to suffer so much for sins committed before he well knew the nature or danger of his sins; for sins so long since repented of, and forsaken (which is the only satisfactory sign of true repentance) and when so many wicked men in the height of their impiety, and contempt of God and Religion, go away here unpunished; whereas he had made it his business and delight to serve him, as he speaks in this Chapter, <sup>23. 16.</sup> *My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept and not declined; neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips: I have esteemed the words* <sup>12.</sup> *of his mouth, more than my necessary food.* But after all this, to find God's hand so heavy upon him, made him sometimes complain *in the anguish and bitterness of his Soul; Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so* <sup>7. 11. 203</sup> *that I am a burden to my self?* And elsewhere, *I was at ease, he hath broken* <sup>Job 16. 12.</sup> *me asunder; he hath also taken me by my neck and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark.* Nothing sunk his spirit, till he thought God was displeas'd with him; and then his heart and courage fail'd him; and he begg'd compassion from his hard-hearted Friends, <sup>19. 21.</sup> *Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends: for the hand of God hath touch'd me.* Which makes good the observation of the Wise Man, <sup>Prov. 18.</sup> *That the spirit of a man will* <sup>14.</sup> *sustain his infirmities; i. e. a Man's natural courage will carry him through a great many troubles, but a wounded spirit who can bear? i. e. when a Man's heart fails him, he becomes a burden to himself; every thing adds to his trouble, and nothing can give him ease but what can revive his Spirit. Now, no consideration in the World doth so break in pieces and confound and shatter the Spirit of a Man, like the apprehension of God's wrath and displeasure against him for his sins; which made *Job* cry out, like one wounded in the most tender and incurable parts, <sup>6. 4.</sup> *The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit; the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.***

But after all this,

(3.) God may not be so displeas'd with such Persons as lie under great afflictions, as they apprehend him to be. And this was the truth of *Job's* Case; his sufferings were extraordinary, and such an unusual concurrence of so many sad accidents, made him think he had great cause to apprehend an immediate hand of God to be stretcht out against him. But the main design of this Book, is to shew that all these afflictions were intended only as trials of his Patience, and that God never loved him better than at this time, when he thought him so much displeas'd with him; as he shew'd in the Conclusion. This is a very hard thing for Persons under great afflictions to believe, and it is not necessary they should; nay, sometimes the apprehension of God's displeasure against them for their sins, is one of the most useful parts of afflictions: for without this they are apt either to enflame Men's minds with discontent and unruly Passions; or to stupefy them with the dull and heavy *Opiates* of *Chance* or *Necessity*; but when afflictions are looked on as coming from God's hand, this rouses and awakens our minds, and makes us think it necessary to look about us, to search and examine our ways, to find out the particular sins we have given way to, which may have justly provok'd God to shew his displeasure against us. As we have reason above all things, to be afraid of his anger; so it is our Wisdom to apprehend the least change of his Countenance towards us, and to make our Peace with him, and then we have no cause to fear any thing that may happen to us: For the Wise God will then turn all our Crosses into such proper Remedies for the Diseases of our Minds, that the sharpest afflictions will tend more to the purging away our sins, and thereby to a more sound and healthful state of our Souls, than all the sleeping Potions of the intoxicating pleasures and vanities of this World would ever have done. For Luxury and Epicurism, with all the Arts of heightning the Pleasures of Life, are things not more delightful to sense than dangerous to men's Souls. They are like too frequent use of Spirits in a time of health, which weaken the force of Nature by raising it too high. So that were it in the choice of a wise Man to have and enjoy as much of this World as he pleas'd, he would see a necessity to restrain his appetite, and to deny himself some of the lawful Pleasures of Life; were it only to keep up the relish by variety; and by enjoying them less, to hope to enjoy them longer. We have certainly then no reason to complain, if God thinks fit to debar us at all times, any use of unlawful Pleasures, and an inordinate use of any; since he leaves scope enough for the true contentment of Life; and if at sometimes he judges it necessary to give us Physick as well as Food, shall we not submit to his Will?

Job 2. 10. For as *Job* saith, *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* as if he had said, "Shall we think much that our Father should be our *Physician*; that he who hath been hitherto so kind to us to please us, should now be so kind to undertake our Cure? Shall we complain that our *Physician* doth not humour our Palates, when he designs our health? God knows what is better for us than we do for our selves; and that which seems most evil at present, may turn to the greatest good. I confess afterwards, *Job* being either sowed by the malignity of his Distemper, or heated by the impertinency or bitterness of his Friends Discourses (for if they had no relation to his Case, they were impertinent; if they had, they were severe and uncharitable) doth break out sometimes into some expressions of impatience; but

but these arose from the Clouds upon his mind, which made him then apprehend all these afflictions to come from God's wrath and indignation against him; the thoughts of which he was not able to bear: but therein he was wholly mistaken, and then only hit upon the truth of his Case when he said, *When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold,* 23. 10.  
*i. e.* more pure and refined, more bright and glorious.

(4.) In the hardest condition good Men can be cast into, they have more comfortable hopes towards God than other Men can have. *Job* was extremely afflicted to think the best Friend he had in the World, and whom he desired to please above all things, should become his Enemy, and set himself against him; but he did not always think so, although his Friends representend his condition to him in the blackest and most frightfull manner, which startled him and made him resent his sufferings with great bitterness, and express it with a kind of horror; yet he soon recovered himself out of those Agonies, and kept up his trust and confidence in God. And there were two things which supported him under all his dismal apprehensions.

(1.) The reflections of a good Conscience in the discharge of his duty to God and Man; and therefore he tells his Friends, after all their sharp reflections upon him, *Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me; my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.* Job 27. 5, 6. It was this which raised his Spirits, and made him stand his ground against the opposition of his Friends, and the scorn of his Enemies: It was this, which made him despise the meanness of those who courted, admired, and flatter'd him in his former Greatness; but now despised and derided him, making him the subject of their raillery and entertainments: *And now I am their Song, yea, I am their by-word;* Job 30. 9. even theirs who but a little before, as he at large describes it, kept their distance from him, and made way for him as he passed the streets, and admired all he spoke as Oracles, and all he did as the perfection of Wisdom and Vertue. But so wise a Man could not but be surpris'd to see flattery turned into scorn and derision; (for no Man thinks to gain by his flattery, who hath not a secret contempt of the person he flatters) and so good a Man could not but forgive the unjust reproaches that were cast upon him, as long as he had the inward satisfaction of his own Integrity. And therefore he gives so ample an account of his whole Life and Actions, both in his publick and private capacities; not to boast of his Vertues, but to be a just vindication of his Innocence under all their aspersions; and to let them see, that the comfort of a good Conscience doth not fail, when Friends do, and as the Wise Man speaks: *When the back sliders in heart shall be filled with their own ways; a good man shall be satisfied from himself.* Ch. 30. & 31. Prov. 14. 14.

(2.) The expectation of a future recompence; either in this World, as he seem'd to hope, or at least in another. Some think, that *Job* spake as to this Life, when he said, *For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the Earth; And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God:* Job 19. 25, 26. and to the meaning of these Words is, though at present his Case seem'd desperate, and his Life past hope, *the worms eating through his skin;* yet he had a secret hope, that God would at last redeem him out of his troubles, and that very loathsome Carkass of his would hold out so long as to see that Day. But the Christian Church hath generally understood

derstood them to refer to the Day of *Resurrection*, when he was certain that God would reward his innocency and sincerity: And of a future state, it is plain he had an undoubted expectation, when he saith, *What is the hope of the Hypocrite, although he hath gained, when God taketh away his Soul?* which shews the great folly of Hypocrisie, which can never stand a man in stead beyond this World, where he must leave all his Riches, and Honours, and Hopes, and Happiness behind him; and the just expectation good Men had, that God would reward them after this Life, though they were sufferers in this. And therefore, although *Job* had such dreadfull apprehensions of God at present, yet he had very comfortable hopes as to his future condition, when he calls God his Redeemer, even the same of whom he here saith, *When I consider, I am afraid of him.*

(2.) But if so good, so vertuous, so sincere a Man as *Job* had such terrible apprehensions of God, what can we wretched Sinners think of him? if *when he considered, he was afraid of him*; have we not reason *when we consider*, to sink into despair? Can we appeal to God as to the sincerity of our hearts in his fear and service, as *Job* did? Can we say with *Job*, that *we have not gone back from the commandment of his lips, but have esteemed the words of his mouth more than our necessary food?* Have we not rather cast his most just and reasonable commandments behind our backs, and esteemed our vanities, our superfluities, our debaucheries, our follies, *above the words of his mouth?* But if we have not despised his Laws, yet we cannot say, as *Job* did, that *our feet have held his steps, his way have we kept and not declined*; for our Consciences cannot but condemn us for the breach of his Laws; and our sins, our great and manifold sins bear witness against us: What apprehensions of God then may we entertain in our minds, when even *Job was afraid of him?* I answer,

(1.) None ought to look upon God as so terrible, as to make them despair.

(2.) Men ought to have different apprehensions of God, according to the nature and continuance of their sins.

(1.) None ought to look upon God as so terrible, as to make them despair. For when our apprehensions of God are such as drive us from him, they overthrow the great end of Religion, which is to bring God and Man nearer together. None ought to exclude themselves from mercy, whom God hath not excluded from it; and God excludes none whom he invites to repent, with a promise of forgiveness, if they do it; and the goodness and long-suffering, and forbearance of Sinners, is on purpose design'd to lead them to Repentance. So that after all this, to despair, is not only to reject the mercy which God offers, but to question his Truth and Sincerity, to slight his Patience, to disparage his Goodness, and to look upon him as a most revengefull and implacable Being; which is, to entertain most dishonourable and unworthy thoughts of the best, the wisest, the most mercifull and compassionate Being in the World; who hath proclaimed himself to be a *God mercifull and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, i. e. to all that truly repent of them.* So that *when we consider*, we have no reason to be so afraid of him as to despair.

(2.) Men ought to have different apprehensions of God, according to the nature and continuance of their sins. For as on the one side, the



the Scripture assures us, that *God knoweth our frame, and remembreth* Pfal. 1:3. *that we are dust*; and therefore will make all just and reasonable allowances for the unavoidable infirmities of Humane Nature, and all circumstances that abate the wilfulness of our evil Actions: so on the other side, at the same time when he declared his infinite goodness, he adds, *and that will by no means clear the guilty*; not of any kind of sin; for then none could escape, since all have sinned; and therefore are become guilty before him: but *the guilty* are such, as add impenitency and obstinacy to their sins; such as wilfully and presumptuously, not only break, but contemn his Laws; not barely neglect their duty, but despise it; such as are not meerly cold and indifferent about Religion, but are zealously concerned against it, and endeavour to expose it to scorn and contempt. For a very judicious Interpreter saith, This severity of God here spoken of, *in visiting the iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children*, &c. is not to be understood of all crimes, but of such as immediately concern the honour of the Divine Majesty, such as Apostasy, Idolatry, and consequently Atheism and Irreligion; which is a Plot against Heaven, an attempt to dethrone the Divine Majesty, or to make his Government insignificant in the World. If faults are justly aggravated among Men, not so much from other circumstances, as from the dignity of the Person against whom they are committed; and from the tendency of them: Will not the parity of reason so far hold, as to aggravate those sins which are immediate offences against the *Divine Majesty*, and which tend to overthrow his Government of the World?

II. And so I come to the second sense of these Words, as they may be taken for *Job's* Vindication of himself from the unjust charge of his Friends, as though he were a *secret Hypocrite*, or a contemner of God and Religion, under a fair outward shew of Piety and Devotion. For, *Eliphaz* in plain terms, in the foregoing Chapter, tells him, he was one of those who thought God was at too great a distance to take notice of things upon Earth. *And thou sayest, how doth God know? Can he judge* Job 22:13, *through the dark Cloud? Thick Clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth* 14. *not, and he walketh in the circuit of Heaven.* Which is in short, to charge him with denying the Providence of God; and reckon him with those *that said unto God, depart from us? and what can the Almighty do for* Job 22:17. *them? i. e.* with such as would have nothing to do with God or Religion, looking on it as a foppish useless thing: but however, he gives him good counsel to repent of his folly, and to apply himself yet to God; *Acquaint now thy self with him, and be at peace, thereby good shall* 21. *come to thee. Receive I pray thee the law from his mouth, and lay up his* 22. *words in thine heart: i. e.* be perswaded to be Religious in good earnest, and to let the fear of God make a deep impression upon your Soul, and you will find great benefit and advantage by it. *If thou return to* 23. *the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, &c.* *Job* finding his Friends so often letting fall expressions to this purpose, and knowing no imaginable reason for it, but a groundless suspicion they had entertained, because of his unusual sufferings, makes here in this Chapter a solemn protestation of the mighty value and esteem he had for the Laws of God, that *he* 23:11, 12. *constantly observed them, and esteemed them more than his necessary food.* And to let them know that this was no sudden heat he tells *Eliphaz*, that the fear of God in him, came from the most weighty and serious con-

ration; *When I consider, I am afraid of him*: as if he had said, "I have spent many thoughts about God and Religion, whether there be any just reason for Mankind to apprehend and stand in awe of an infinite Being above them; and I do assure you, the more I have fixed my thoughts upon this matter, and laid all things before me, the deeper impressi<sup>o</sup>n the fear of God hath made upon me: or as some render it, *perpendo & paveo, I consider, and I fear him.*

Wherein are two things implied.

I. That Men's difesteem of Religion doth arise from want of *Consideration*.

II. That the more Men *consider*, the more settled and fixed will their minds be in the esteem and practice of Religion.

I. That Men's difesteem of Religion doth arise from the want of *Consideration*.

Which will best appear, by examining the most common and prevailing reasons of Men's difesteem of it; which are chiefly these two.

(1.) Their looking on Religion as a matter of meer *interest and design*, without any other foundation.

(2.) The unaccountable folly and superstitious fears of Mankind; which makes them think more to be in it than really is.

(1.) Looking on the whole business of Religion as a *matter of interest and design*; first started by some great *Politicians* to tame and govern Mankind, and ever since kept up by a Company of *Priests* who lived upon the Cheat, and therefore were bound to maintain, and to keep it up; which otherwise would sink to nothing.

This is the worst can be said against Religion; and it is bad enough of all reason, if it were true: and we should deserve all the scorn and contempt, which such men treat us with, if we were but accessory to so great a fraud and imposture.

But is there such a thing as *Reason* among Mankind? Can we judge of what is true and false; probable or improbable; certain or uncertain? Or must some things be run down, without examining? and others taken up, without any other colour of reason, than because they serve to such a purpose?

For God's sake, and for our own sakes then, let us *consider* these things a little better, before we pronounce against them, or entertain any doubt or suspicion of them in our minds. And there is this great reason for it, that the wisest, the best, the most considering, the most disinterested Men have taken the part of Religion, and been zealous Defenders of it; whereas on the other side, the younger, the looser, the more debauched part of Mankind, have been most enclined to Atheism and Irreligion.

But if we have not *Reason* of our side, we are content to give up the Cause, and to be thought *Deceivers* (which goes very hardly down with an ingenuous mind:) and if on the other side, there be nothing found but false and groundless suppositions, or unreasonable suspicions; I hope, *Religion* may be fairly acquitted from being thought a meer contrivance of *Politicians*, and we from being *the Silver-Smiths* to this *Diana*.

(1.) Those

(1.) Those who make Religion to be such a contrivance, must suppose that all Mankind were once without any such thing as Religion. For, if some crafty *Politicians* did first start the notion of an *Invisible Being* among the rude and unthinking Multitude, the better to awe them into Obedience to Government; then Mankind must have lived before those *Politicians* appear'd, with as little sense of God and Religion, and with as much security and ease, as to the thoughts of another World, as the very Beasts that perish. If this were true, these *Politicians* were so far from consulting the interest of Mankind, that they were the greatest Enemies to it; by filling their minds with such unconquerable fears, as rob them of that undisturbed Tranquillity which they enjoyed before. But when and where did this race of Mankind live, whom these designing Men first cheated into the belief of a Deity, and the practice of Religion? The eldest Writings in the World, without all dispute, are those of the Holy Scriptures; and among these, the Book of *Job* hath been thought the most ancient; for in all this Book we have not one word of the Law of *Moses*, or of Circumcision; which makes it very probable to have been written before the Children of *Israel's* coming out of *Ægypt*; (and some *Arabic* Writers think that *Job* lived before *Abraham*; and others, at least in the time of *Jacob*) how-  
Greg. Abul. farat. hist. Dynast. 2. 13. Hier. Trad. Hebr. in Gen. 22.

ever it be, this Book of *Job* gives an account of the sense of mankind about Religion very early; and by it we find that the great, and wise, and understanding men of the World, such as *Job* and his three Friends were (who as far as appears by the story, were all of them independent Princes; such as were common then, and a long time after, in those parts about *Arabia*) had a mighty sense of God and Providence, and the Duties of Religion upon their minds. And they not only give an ample Testimony as to their own times, but they appeal to all the Traditions of former times; *Enquire I pray thee, of the former Ages*, saith one of *Job's* Friends, *and prepare thy self to the search of their Fathers. For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing.* But what is it he appeals to Antiquity for, and the observations of all former Ages? It was for this, *viz.* the bad condition of all that were not sincere in Religion: *So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrites hope shall perish.* And another of his Friends speaking of the remarkable judgments of God upon the World, saith to *Job*, *Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have troden; which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overthrown with a flood? i. e.* the Men of the old World. And what was their great and provoking sin? A contempt of God and Religion, *Which said unto God, Depart from us; and what can the Almighty do for them?* This is the oldest and truest, and severest instance of such a profane and irreligious temper, and the great mischief it brought upon the World; which shews, that this is not the original disposition of Mankind, but the monstrous degeneracy of it. But if they are unsatisfied with the Testimony of *Job's* Friends, let them produce any to be mentioned the same Day with it, which can pretend to give a truer account of the Religion of the first Ages of the World? I do not mention *Moses* (although his Authority be unquestionable) lest he should be thought one of these *Politicians*, who inspired the People of *Israel* with the Principles of Religion; but I rather chuse this instance of the free Princes of those parts of the East, who were under subjection to no common Authority, yet were so early possessed themselves with such firm Principles of Religion, and assure us that all good Men had

had the same; and that they were slighted by none, but such loose and profane wretches, whom God set up for the Monuments of his Indignation.

(2.) Suppose we should allow that in a particular Nation, some great and wise Man should think fit to reclaim a loose and barbarous People by the Principles of Religion; how doth this prove Religion to be false, or what doth it signify to the universal consent of Mankind? Is it any Argument that there is no foundation in Nature for justice, Charity, and common Humanity, because wise Men have been put to use variety of methods to reduce Canibals to civility? And it would be as good arguing against all Morality from thence, as against Religion, because it was judged by wise Men a necessary instrument to civilize Mankind. And as far as I can observe. Religion and Civility have risen and sunk together. The Roman Orator made a bold Challenge as to the then known World, to name any Nation *so barbarous, that they had no Religion among them.* And although the Romans knew but little of the habitable World in comparison of what is now known; yet upon the whole matter, the new discoveries add force and strength to the Argument; only with annexing this observation, That the more improved and civilized any People have been, the more regard they have had to Religion; the more ignorant, sottish, and barbarous they were, although they were not wholly without Religion, yet it was in less esteem and honour among them: and this observation will hold, as to all the Nations since discovered both in the East and West-Indies. But what a mighty number of *Politicians* must spring out of the Earth at once, to scatter *the seeds of Religion*, in such a manner, over all the face of the Earth? It is impossible that a few Men, though never so subtle, never so experienced, should be able to captivate all Mankind in so great a variety of Language, and distance of Countries. And such an universal Effect must have some common and universal Cause; which the invention of a few crafty Men could never be.

(3.) But suppose this to have happened in some one unlucky Age, when the Earth brought forth such a fruitful crop of *Politicians*; yet how comes it to pass, since these have so long been laid in their Graves, the effect of this Policy should still remain all the World over? For, every Age is apt to condemn the Policy of the foregoing; and whether the men of the present Age stand upon the shoulders of the precedent or not, they are very apt to think they see farther than they; how comes it then in so many Ages, as have passed since these deep *Politicians* lived, that no other Persons have been able to lay open the artifice of Religion so, as to free mankind from the pretended slavery of it? It cannot be said, *that there were none to attempt it*; for that were to own an absolute consent of all mankind as to Religion. And we know there were some once at *Athens*, who set up with a design to overthrow Religion; but with so very little success, whatever the Roman Poet boasts, that they were fain to be very private in their meetings: and the City was so

As: 17. 22. little moved with their Discourses, that *S. Paul* saith, *the Men of Athens were in all things too superstitious.* It cannot be said, *that there were none ready to join in such a design*; for all bad men had rather there were no Religion at all; and their number is never small, and never unwilling to carry it on: How comes it then after all, that Religion still prevailed, and the fears of a Deity could not be shaken off, no not by the greatest *Politicians* themselves, who thought they understood all the

Arts of Government, as well as any that had been before them? Would not some of the Roman Emperours, who had none to controul them, have been glad to have eased themselves of the fears of an invisible Power? But they found after all their strugglings, it was a thing not to be done; God and Conscience were so much too hard for their loose reasoning set up against them, that where men had shaken off the love of Religion, they could not shake off the fears that follow the contempt of it. But where mankind have been imposed upon, when once the cheat is discovered, all its force is for ever lost: for men do not love to be deceived, especially in matters that so very nearly concern them; so that if Religion had been a trick of so long standing, assuredly it would have been hooted out of the World long ago; and nothing would have been so ridiculous as to pretend to it. But thanks be to God, the credit of Religion is not yet worn out of the World; which can be owing to nothing but to those invincible Reasons, on which it stands. For there hath wanted nothing of wit or malice in profane Persons, to undermine and blow up the reputation of it. But the foundations on which it is built, are so firm and stable, and have endured the violent shocks, and secret attempts of so many Ages, that as long as reason and civility hold up in the World, we need not question but Religion will. If once I begin to see Mankind cast off all the reins of Civil Government, and run wild and savage, quitting all the conveniences and pleasures of Houses and Lands, and Cloths, to live naked in the Woods, and to feed on Roots and Acorns, because they suspect that all Civil Government, was a crafty design of some cunning Men to get above others; I may then begin to think that such suspicions about Religion, may prevail upon Mankind to cast off the most reasonable obligations to maintain the profession and the practice of it. For although the Reasons on which Religion is grounded, be independent on Civil Authority, such as the train of Causes, the Motion, Order, Beauty, usefulness of all the parts of the Universe; which remain the same in all Ages, and under all Revolutions: yet the Principles of Religion do really give so much strength and support to Civil Government, that none who have a kindness to the one, can be Enemies to the other; and they who suspect Religion to be an Imposture, will be as ready to suspect all Government to be no better: the consequence whereof will be nothing but Barbarism and Confusion.

(2.) But it may be said, that although the Principles of Religion in general, are reasonable enough in themselves; and the things we observe in the World, do naturally lead men to own a Deity; yet when they reflect on the strange *folly* and *superstitious fear* of mankind, they are apt still to suspect, that men being puzzled and confounded, have frightened themselves into the belief of Invisible Powers, and performing Acts of Worship and Devotion to them, as appears by so many imaginary Deities among the Heathen; and the superstitions which still prevail on so great a part of the World. But this way of reasoning is just as if a man should argue that there is no such thing as true Reason in mankind, because imagination is a wild, extravagant, unreasonable thing; or that we never see any thing when we are awake, because in our Dreams we fancy we see things which we do not. We cannot deny the follies of mankind about Religion, either Ancient or Modern: but when was it given to all the World to be wise? It were extremely to be wished, that nothing but pure and undefiled Religion should obtain in the World?

World? or at least that the Christian World were purged from the follies of Enthusiasm and Superstition. But alas! the more we consider all the wilful errors, and involuntary mistakes, vicious Inclinations, violent Passions, foolish Opinions, strange Prejudices; superficial Reasonings, and obstinate Resolutions which are incident to Mankind, we shall see greater reason to wonder, that there is so much true Religion in the World, than that there is no more. Nothing but the strong impression God hath made of himself on the Souls of Men; nothing but a Divine Hand could have kept such a flame alive, in the midst of so many contrary Winds of Mens different Passions and Interests, and such a rough and tempestuous Sea, as the state of this World hath generally been with respect to true Religion. But if through the mercy of God it fares better among us, as to outward circumstances (for which we ought to be very thankful) let not Religion bear the blame of all the follies and indiscretions of those who profess it. It is a hard Case, if the common weaknesses of Humane Nature, and those faults which Men commit through the want of Religion, shall be laid to the charge of it. But nothing is more apt to incline Men of better understandings, to ill thoughts of Religion, than to see it made use of, to serve bad purposes and designs, to cover ambitious projects; and to draw in people the more easily into Faction and Rebellion; and while they look on this side of the Picture, and see there nothing but the lamentable spectacles of the mischiefs which have been done in the World under the pretence of Religion, they are far from thinking those *Politicians*, that invented it; it being so easily turned upon the Government, and being then so dangerous to it. (Which is a farther Argument to me, that it could not be a contrivance of such Men: for then there would have been no other Scheme of Religion owned in the World, but that of the *Levite*, which being so great a Novelty, it is a certain sign, that Religion was not framed merely to serve the ends of Government.) But however, that only true and holy Religion which we profess, is so far from giving any encouragement to seditious Practices, that it is not possible to contrive a Religion, which we must adhere to whatever we suffer for it, that should more effectually recommend the Duties of Quietness, Patience, and submission to Authority, than the genuine Religion of our Saviour doth. As long therefore as the Rules of our Religion are so plain and easie, so reasonable, so useful, and beneficial to Mankind, we ought not to lessen our esteem of it, for the sake of any weak, or superstitious, or hypocritical pretenders to it.

II. Having thus far shewed, that Mens disesteem of Religion comes from the want of *Consideration*, I now come to the last thing I designed, as the *Application* of the rest, *viz.* That the more Men do consider, the more they will esteem Religion, and apply themselves to the practice of it.

And now methinks, I may with greater assurance address my self to all sorts of Persons, since all that I shall request, will lie in two very reasonable things.

1. To *consider* impartially what is fit for them to do in Religion.
2. To practise so much of Religion, as upon *Consideration* will appear fitting to be done.

(I.) To consider impartially what is fit for them to do in Religion. I am not going about to persuade you to leave your Estates and Employments,

ments, and to retire your selves from the World and to give up your selves wholly to Devotion. For I do not deny but that they who serve their Prince and their Country, and follow their lawfull Employments, with an honest and conscientious diligence, and neglect no necessary Duties of Religion, do carry on the great ends of Religion, as well as those, whose time and occasions will give them leave to devote themselves more to Fasting and Prayer. But let none think the matters of Religion to belong to others, and that they have business of another nature to attend upon, as though paying their duty to God, were fit only for those who had nothing else to do. While *Job* was in the height of his Prosperity, and was *the greatest of all the men of the East*; Job 1. 3. he tells his Friends how much he was employed in doing all the good he could by works of Justice and Charity; *He was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and a father to the poor: and the cause which he knew not, he searched out; yet he esteemed the Words of God's Mouth* or the means 29. 12, &c. 31. 13, &c. whereby his Duty was made known to him, *more than his necessary food*; 23. 12. 1. 5. 16. 17. he had his sett times of offering sacrifice and prayer to God; and upon extraordinary occasions, he required his Children to prepare themselves for the solemn Sacrifice by Fasting and Prayer; which is meant *by sanctifying them*. 1. 5. So that not only constant Offices of Religion, but more solemn Acts of Devotion at certain seasons, are not only agreeable to the ancient practice of the Christian Church, but to the most ancient Principles of natural Religion, as they were understood and practised in the time of *Job*; who was so great a Person in God's esteem, that himself, who knew him best, gave that Character of him, *That there was none like him upon earth*; and therefore we cannot follow a better Example.

(2.) Let us then set our selves to practise all the known Duties of our Religion, and the more we consider these things, we shall be more resolved to do it.

(1.) That God infinitely deserves from us all the service we can do him.

(2.) That we cannot serve our selves better, than by faithfully serving him.

(1.) That God infinitely deserves from us all the service we can do him. *Can a man, saith Eliphaz, be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself?* Job 22. 3. *i. e.* he cannot: but yet if God expects and requires such service from us, we have no reason to enquire farther; for we are certain all we can do, falls infinitely short of the obligations he hath laid upon us. For let us consider, Was it not God who formed us in our Mothers Womb, and so curiously framed and fashioned all the parts of our Bodies? Was it not He, that breathed into us the breath of Life, that first set the *Wheel* in motion by the course of the blood, and settled the *Cistern* in the Heart to receive and disperse it, and the *Pitcher at the fountain*, to take it at its return from the Veins? Ecccl. 12. 6. Was it not He, that fixed the *golden Bowl* in the Head that covers the Brain, and stretched out the *silver Cord* of the Nerves over the whole Body, for the admirable use and service of all the Parts? Was it not He, that endued us with those noble Faculties of Understanding, Reasoning, Reflecting, Remembling, Discouring with others, and Governing our selves? Was it not He, that made all the Parts of the World about us so serviceable and beneficial to us? Was it not He, that preserved us from so many and great Dangers which we have been exposed to by open Violence, and secret Conspiracies; by Fire, and Sword, and Plague; by storms at Sea, and upon Land too? Was it not He, that

hath so often scatter'd the Clouds, that threatned us, when the face of the Heavens gathered blackness, and all things seem'd to tend to confusion? Is it not He, who still wonderfully continues our Peace and Plenty, amidst all the sad complaints, and miserable condition of our Neighbours? yea, who continues our Laws, our Government, our Religion amidst all the Fears and Conspiracies which have been among us? And shall we think much to serve so Wise, so Mercifull, so Gracious a God? Is it not He, that hath exercised so much patience, and long-suffering, and goodness towards us in order to our Repentance? That still offers to us the most unvaluable Blessings of the pardon of our Sins, and everlasting Happiness upon our sincere Repentance? Yea, is it not He, that hath given his own Son to die for our Sins, and exposed him to the Reproach and Pain of an accursed Death upon the Cross, that he might be a Sacrifice of Atonement for us? And will not all these Motives prevail with us to fear and serve him, who hath deserved so much more from us, than the service of our whole Lives, in the most perfect Obedience, would make a requital for? Shall we then grudge him that proportion of sincere Obedience, which he is not only willing to accept of, but hath promised to reward with a Crown of everlasting Glory? Which is the last thing to be considered.

(2.) That in serving God faithfully we do most effectually serve our selves and promote our own Interest. *Men will praise thee*, saith the *Psalmist*, *when thou dost well to thy self*. Not, when thou pamperest thy Body, and thereby layest a foundation for Lusts and Diseases; not, when thou *heapest up Riches, and knowest not who shall gather them*; not, when thou givest way to all the Vanities and Follies of a deceitfull World: but when thou takest a just care of thy true and lasting interest. For as *Job* saith, *God looked on this as the proper Wisdom of Mankind: Unto Man he said, The fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding*. And that is certainly our true Wisdom, whereby we secure our best Friend in all conditions, we disappoint our greatest Enemies, we lay the surest foundation for Peace and Tranquillity in our Minds while we live, and a Blessed Eternity when we die. To which God of his Infinite Mercy bring us.

T O



TO THE  
Right Reverend Father in God

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H E N R Y

A

L O R D B I S H O P O F L O N D O N  
S E R M O N

Preached at a Publick

ORDINATION

A T

St. Peter's Cornhill,

March 15th, 1684<sup>5</sup>.

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Zz 2

T O T H E

Right Reverend Father in God,

H E N R Y,

LORD BISHOP of LONDON,

One of the LORDS of His MAJESTIES  
PRIVY COUNCIL, &c.

My LORD,

**W**hen I lately received Your Lordships Command for Printing the Sermon I Preach'd at Your last Solemn Ordination, I thought Your Lordship's Authority and Judgment ought to Over-rule my own Inclinations; although the Experience of a former Storm, on a like Occasion, might justly make me unwilling to venture abroad again, unless there were some Hopes of a Calmer Season. But whatever the Issue be, I have the Satisfaction of doing my Duty; and I hope others will have so much, at least in Reading it, as to be convinc'd, how unjustly I have been, not long since, represent'd to the World, as an Enemy to the very Being of Churches in general, and to the Constitution of this Church in particular.

A Calumny so groundless and ridiculous, that the Author of it doth not produce one considerable Argument (for I envy him not the rare Embellishments of his Style) to prove the Church a distinct Society; which I had not made use of to that Purpose in a Discourse published above Twenty years since.

But this must never be taken notice of, nor any of those passages in my later Writings; wherein I had fully asserted and vindicated the Churches Power in general, and the particular Constitution of this Church, lest the World should laugh at the Folly and Malice of such an unskilfull Maker of Controversies, who follows the Schoolmen onely in two things, viz. a Barbarous Style, and a Rude Way of Disputing with his Brethren.

But

But that is a small thing with him, who in one single Page of his Of the subject of Church-Power, p. 514. Book, charges no less than two of our Renowned Archbishops, Whitgift and Bancroft, and the Learned Bishop of Winchester, Bilson, with Writing Inconsiderately; and that for a new sort of Henrician Heresie, viz. deriving the Magistrates Power from Christ.

If this Person had not with great humility written himself the Vicar of Cosmus Blene, one might have thought, by these passages, he had fancied himself another kind of Vicar; especially, when he proceeds so like a Judge of Controversies, and after an imperious manner, summons me, by a kind of Citation, to answer to such Questions as he should demand of me; but out of Respect to Your Lordships Authority, and Jurisdiction over me, I declined giving any Answer to him. And he hath since Printed his Monitory Letter in the Preface to his Book. Therefore lest my silence on this Occasion, should make others think, there were some ground for such a Publick Accusation of me; I shall, in a few words, lay open before Your Lordship, (to whom I owe an Account of my Actions) the Nature and Merits of this Cause, and the only Foundation of all this Noise and Clamour, that Your Lordship may Judge, how well I am treated by this Accuser of his Brethren.

It happen'd, my Lord, that in my younger days (about Twenty five years since) I thought it necessary to inform my self, as well as I could, in the state of the Controversie about Church Government, which had been managed with so much Heat among us, and was then like to be revived. And to that end I applied my self to the Reading and Considering the Authors of greatest esteem on both sides; and by diligent perusing of them, I thought them more happy, in overthrowing each others Hypothesis, than in setting up their own. And supposing no better Reasons could be produced than I found in them, I from thence concluded, that the Form of Church Government was left at Liberty by any Law of Christ, and was therefore to be determined, as served best to the great Ends of Peace and Order; which were the plain and standing Laws of the Christian Church.

To make this more clear, I considered the Nature and Force of Laws; what there was in the Christian Society, which was taken from the Law of Nature, what from Divine Positive Laws; whether the Places of Scripture, or Testimony of Antiquity, or Reformed Churches, did determine this Matter. All which being put together, I did adventure to publish at that time, hoping by that means to bring over those to a Compliance with the Church of England (then like to be Re established) who stood off upon the Supposition, that Christ had appointed a Presbyterian Government to be always continued in his Church; and

Jus Divi-  
num Regi-  
minis Ec-  
clesiastici,  
&c.

and therefore they thought Prelacy was to be detested, as an unlawfull Usurpation. In the very first Chapter of the Book I set my self to Answer the Presbyterian Arguments, without mentioning their Books, in which they may be still seen, and so quite through I omitted nothing that was pleaded by them against Submission to Episcopal Government. And I dare challenge any Man to produce one Passage in the whole Book that tended to encourage Faction or Schism, or Opposition to the Church of England; but on the contrary, I endeavour'd to recommend the Episcopal Government, as having the Advantage of all others, and coming nearest to Apostolical Practice; and I concluded all with the Proposal of King Charles I. at the end of his second Paper at the Isle of Wight, as most highly just and reasonable, viz. The reducing Episcopacy and Presbytery to such a well proportion'd Form of Superiority and Subordination, as may best resemble the Apostolical and Primitive times, so far forth as the different condition of the times, and the exigences of all considerable circumstances will admit.

And now, my Lord, You see my Crime; and if in this last I erred, it was with a most Excellent Prince, and a True Friend to the Church of England, whose Sufferings could never make him warp from what his Conscience and Judgment directed.

I do not deny, my Lord, that I do now think much more is to be said for the Apostolical Institution of Episcopacy, than I at that time apprehended (as will fully appear in the following Sermon:) But I confess, I yet see no Cause for such Clamours against this Book, as though nothing could satisfie but a Recantation of it, as Publick as the Error, Scandal and Offence given by it. These are the Terms prescribed me by the Lofty Superintendent of Cosmus Blene; but they are, in truth, a Reflexion on all my Superiours in the Church, who, for so long a time, have been pleased to treat me with more kindness, than so much as to mention any such thing to me, with respect to that unlucky Book, as my Accuser calls it. For they were so wise, to consider the Time when it was Written, viz. before the Church was Re-established; And with what Design it was Written, viz. to gain upon the Dissenters from our Church. And it did not want Success that way, both here, and in a Neighbour Kingdom. But suppose there were Errours and Mistakes in it (as no doubt there were) they were so wise to make Allowances for the Scepticalness and Injudiciousness of Youth, and for the Prejudices of Education. All Men are not so happy to be born or bred in settled times, which they have had no Temptation to think otherwise than they do: But suppose a Man brought up when

all

all things are in Confusion, and every one at liberty to chuse his own Way; Was it not a fair step towards the Church of England, even then to receive Episcopal Orders, and to follow the Directions of an Excellent Bishop of this Church? Which things I can truly affirm of my self at that time. And for many years since it is well known, that besides the constant Duties of my Place (in which I have always opposed Faction and Schism) I have made it my Business to defend the Church of England; against its Enemies on both sides.

But it seems nothing can Atonement for such an Error with these Implacable Men, but a Publick Recantation. And are we sure that will do it? It seems to me to be a Commendable Piece of Ingenuity in any Person to Retract a former Opinion upon full Conviction, when it proceeds from Judgment and Choice; (for otherwise a Man is but like a Speaking-Trumpet, uttering the Words which others put into him :) but yet some Men love to be still rubbing upon the old sore, and upbraiding such a Man with what he hath Publickly disowned, and with his very disowning of it: Which looks, as if they were glad he had been in the Wrong, and were unwilling he should be otherwise. So that, when Men are resolved to find Fault with others, no Recantation can do them good; but it is very hard for us now to be under such a rigorous Dispensation, which makes every slip unpardonable. Especially, when it is set up by those, who have been such Offenders themselves. For some of these are most apt to be severe towards others; as if it were some Atonement for their own Miscarriages, to be always finding fault with their Brethren. And I heartily wish, my Enemies have none greater to answer for, than such as arise from too great a zeal for Peace and Unity among our selves. Yet if even therein I have gone beyond my bounds, I beg pardon of my Superiours; Since it is too evident, that an untractable Spirit on one side, as well as a pretence to an Infallible Spirit on the other, render all Projects of Accommodation useles.

This I mention, my Lord, because I hear some Proposals of mine, when I was writing against the Dissenters, have given offence to some, and have been made use of to ill purposes by others. But those who consider the Design and Tendency of them, and the Circumstances of that Time when they were made, will see no Cause to pass any severe Censure upon one, who designed to serve the Church of England by them; as the Dissenters themselves confessed, and thought they would end in the Run of the Separation; and therefore never thanked me for them.

And now I hope Your Lordships Goodness (of which I have had so large Experience) will excuse all this Unpleasant Discourse (as usually Apologies are) but since my Accuser thinks Posterity will be concerned

in his Writings in this Cause ( I dare say not to make a Pattern for Style out of them) I was willing to take this opportunity to clear my self for once, to Your Lordship and the World.

As to his Accusation about Archbishop Cranmer's MSS. I think he hath heard enough of that already: and he owes me a Publick Recantation upon his own Terms, for charging me with Unfaithfulness therein, for the Scandal and Offence hath been very Publick.

I am afraid I have exercised Your Lordships Patience too long, and therefore humbly beg your Lordships Blessing upon,

My Lord,

Your Lordships most Faithfull and  
Obedient Servant,

London, June 1st.  
1685.

Edw. Stillingfleet.

SER-

# SERMON XXII.

Preached at a Publick

## ORDINATION

A T

St. Peter's Cornhill;

March 15. 1684<sub>5</sub>.

I TIM. V. 22.

*Lay hands suddenly on no man.*

**T**Hese words are part of the Charge given by St. Paul to Timothy, whom he had intrusted with the Care of the Churches of the Proconsular Asia, when he departed from thence into Macedonia. For, although St. Paul saith, *he besought Timothy to abide still at Ephesus*; yet we are not to suppose, that his Care extended no farther, than to the Church in that City; seeing, by means of St. Paul's Preaching there, St. Luke affirms, *That all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks*: Which can neither be understood of the greater, or lesser Asia; but of that Asia, which lay about Ephesus, and whereof it was the (a) chief Metropolitan City, the (b) Roman Proconsul keeping his ordinary Residence there, and holding those Solemn Courts, to which the Inhabitants of that Province were obliged to resort. But withal, this was the (c) Principal City in the Common Assembly of Asia, (d) a Place of great Trading, the Seat of the most Magnificent Temple of Diana, (e) where the Citizens of Asia met to Worship; on all which Accounts there was a great Concourse of People thither from the parts thereabouts. It is no wonder therefore St. Paul should fix his abode so long in this City, (f) for about the space of three years in all. And yet a long time for him, considering the quickness of his Progress in other places, (g) some

(a) Ἐφεσος ἔστι μὲν τῆς Ἀσίας Μητροπόλις. Chrysol. in Ep. ad Ephes.

Certum est celeberrimam illam civitatem primas semper tenuisse inter omnes hujus Dioceseos Metropoles. Berter. Diatrib. 1. c. 2.

ΕΦΕΣΙΩΝ ΠΡΩΤΩΝ ΑΣΙΑΣ, in Nummis Galieni, Saloninae, Gordiani apud Holsten. not. in Steph. Byzant. p. 123.

Πρώται seu Prima vulgò Græcè dictæ quæ Romanis Metropoles, seu Gentis Capita. Ezek. Spanhem. de Numism. dissert. 9. p. 285

(b) Prima Civitas sed quæ Proconsulis Holst. Ephesum verò alterum lumen Asiae reuociores conveniunt Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 5. c. 29.

(c) Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. 4. c. 13.

(d) Strab. l. 14. Arist. Orat. de Concord. ad Civit. Asiae.

(e) H. Vales. not. in Euseb. l. 4. c. 13.

(f) Act. 20. 31.

(g) Bar. An. Dom. 46. n. 12.

(b) Uffer. *Annal. A. D.* 45. 46.  
 Jac. Cappell *Centur. prima Eccles.*  
*Christian. A. D.* 43. 45.  
 (i) *Act. ch.* 13. & 14.  
 (k) *Act.* 14. 23.

allowing no longer time to his first Peregrination, (b) (others not so much) wherein he and Barnabas planted Churches in (i) Seleucia, Cyprus, Pisidia, Pamphylia and Lycaonia, (k) and ordained Elders in every Church with Fasting and Prayer: From whence

it is very reasonable to infer,

(1.) That this Church at Ephesus was certainly beyond the compass of a particular Congregation; or else St. Paul had very little success in all the Pains he took there; which he so (l) particularly mentions in the solemn leave he took of the Elders of the Church whom he sent for to Miletus. And St. Luke speaking of the Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus, saith, (m) *That fear fell on them all, and the Name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. So mightily grew the Word of God, and prevailed.* And St. Paul himself takes notice, (n) that at Ephesus a great and effectual Door was open'd unto him. What, for one single Congregational Church to be formed in so great a City, with all the success St. Paul had in his Preaching there; when in far less time, he planted so many Churches in other Places!

(l) *Act.* 20. 25.

(m) *Act.* 19. 17.

(n) *1 Cor.* 16. 8, 9.

(2.) That the Extent of St. Paul's Care did reach beyond the Bounds of the City: it being very improbable, that those of Asia should so long hear St. Paul Preach at Ephesus, and yet no Churches be founded, by his means, in any of the neighbour Cities.

But withal, it seems probable to me, that the Elders of those Churches were not as yet removed from Ephesus, where St. Paul ordained them, with a design to fix them in their several Stations; For it is observable, that (o) St. Paul sent to Ephesus for the Elders of the Church to come to Miletus; whereas if they had been dispersed, he would have sent to their several Places of abode; and yet when they came to Miletus from Ephesus (which were not far distant)

(o) *Act.* 10. 17. 20.

(p) If by Miletus that Place be meant, which is now called Figena, or Scala Nova, as some imagine, that lies but 10 Miles from Ephesus to the South-west; but that rather seems to be the Phygela of the Ancients. The Modern Geographers, who make it to be Melasso are certainly mistaken, not only because of the too great distance from Ephesus, but because its Situation doth not agree with that of Miletus; for it appears by Livy and Solinus, that the Meander ran into the Sea, between Miletus and Priene; and but 10 Stadia from Miletus, saith Pliny; but Melasso is a great distance from it. Our latest Travellers think it Palattha; but Dr. Spon confesses that to be some Miles from the Sea; and therefore it seems yet to lie undiscovered in its Ruins, as is well observed by Sir G. Wheler. Ferrarius placeth Ephesus at 30 Miles distance between Smyrna and Miletus. Spon saith, It is a day and a half's journey from Ephesus to Palattha. Arrian describes Miletus as not far from Ephesus, and very near the Sea.

*Solin. c.* 40.  
*Plin. l.* 5. c. 29  
*Voyage du Levant.*  
*To. 1. p.* 359.  
*Wheler's Voyage into the Lesser Asia.*  
*p.* 272.  
*Arr. de Expedition. Alex.*

(p) he discourses to them of his Affairs from the time of his coming unto Asia; after what manner he had been with them at all Seasons, and had kept back nothing profitable for them; but had shewed them, and taught them publicly, and from house to house. Which being spoken to the Elders of the Church, do imply a particular care he had there of fitting Persons for the Pastoral Charge, besides, his Testifying both to the Jews and to the Greeks Repentance towards God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And to these Elders, he

v. 18.

v. 20.

v. 21.

v. 18.

(q) *Iren. l.* 3. c. 14.  
 v. 16.

17.

not only commits the Church of Ephesus, but all the Flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them Overseers, i. e. all that had been converted in Asia, through his means, during his abode there. (q) Irenaeus understands St. Paul, as though he summon'd them from the Neighbour Cities as well as Ephesus; but St. Paul was in so great haste, that he would not so much as go to Ephesus, nor send any whither but to that City; and yet those to whom he committed the whole Flock then in Asia, came from Ephesus to Miletus; which makes it probable, that there



there St. Paul had raised a Nursery for the Churches thereabout, as (r) Clemens observes the Apostles were wont to do in Fruitful Soils; (r) Clem. with a prospect of such Churches as were to be formed. *Τῶν πολλῶν* Epist. 2. 54. *πίστεων.* Now where these were not yet settled, such persons remained under the Apostles immediate Care and Instruction, who by their Doctrine and Example, were still preparing them for so great a Work. And Clemens takes notice that the Apostles were wont to pitch upon their First-Fruits, or most early Converts; and of these at Ephesus we meet with Twelve Persons, upon whom Saint Paul, at his first coming, laid Act. 19. 6, 7. his hands, and the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with Tongues, and Prophesied. And so were qualified in an extraordinary manner, to be Teachers of others; and might be in the number of these Elders; whom St. Paul charges to take heed to themselves, and to all the Flock, over which the Holy Ghost had made them Overseers.

When St. Paul sent for these Elders to Miletus; Timothy was with him: For we find him amongst those who waited for his return at Troas, upon his coming back from Macedonia, through Greece; and therefore his leaving Timothy at Ephesus, was, when he first went into Macedonia, being forced away by the Uproar that was raised against him there. And in his return through Greece, where he abode three Months, he sends this Epistle to Timothy, then at Ephesus and taking Care of the Churches thereabout: As he afterwards left Titus in Crete, to Act. 20. 1. set in order the things that were wanting, and to ordain Elders in every City, as he had appointed him. To this purpose he directs his Canonical Epistle to Timothy; wherein he gives him very particular Directions about the due Exercise of that Apostolical Office, which he was entrusted with the management of; And especially about these things.

(1.) The great regard he ought to have to the Doctrine that was taught by those, who were to instruct others; that thou mightest charge Tim. 1. 3. some, that they teach no other Doctrine.

(2.) The due Performance of the Publick Offices of Divine Worship; that Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions and giving of Thanks be made for 1 Tim. 2. 1. 3. all Men; for Kings and for all that are in Authority, &c. And this Order Timothy was to see observed in the Churches under his Care.

(3.) The proper Qualifications of the Bishops and Deacons of the Church, as the proper Officers of it under Timothy; who was to take care of fit Men, to succeed those who were then in being, or to provide more. Ch 3.

(4.) The manner of proceeding in Church-Censures against Elders and Widows, and open Offenders: Against an Elder receive not an Accusation, Ch 5. 1. to the 21st. but before two or three Witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. Which plainly shews, that there was a Right of Judging and Censuring Offenders in Timothy; by virtue of his Office.

(5.) The Caution to be used, in admitting Persons to these holy Functions, the Qualifications whereof he had laid down before: And for this he gives a general charge, to do nothing in these matters by Partiality; and then mentions the Consideration and Circumspection necessary in the laying on of Hands; Lay hands sudden on no man. v. 21.

Some have thought these words relate to the Reconciliation of Penitents, and not to the Ordination of the Bishops and Deacons before mentioned; because it immediately follows, neither be partaker of other men's sins; but I see no cause to recede from the Sense generally received, for these Reasons.

(1.) Because St. Paul had not mentioned *laying on of hands* in relation to *Penitents*; but he had done it in this *Epistle*, with respect to *Ordination*; and that in *Timothy's* own case; wherein St. Paul as the principal Person did in an Authoritative manner, *lay on his hands*, as himself expresses it, in the second *Epistle*; and the *Presbyters* assisted in *laying on their hands*, to manifest their Concurrence and Approbation: but the *laying on of hands* is no where in these *Epistles*, applied to the other Sense; nor in any other place of Scripture.

(2.) If these words do not relate to *Ordination*, St. Paul would have given *Timothy* no particular direction, about that which was one main part of his Office. As it is expressed concerning *Titus*, *That he was appointed to ordain Elders in every City*: And no doubt *Timothy* had the same *Commission*, which is no where intimated but in these words.

(3.) Supposing, *laying on of hands* then equally used in both Cases, yet the Apostle gives no Rules concerning the *Qualifications* of *Penitents*, as he doth concerning *Bishops* and *Deacons*; and therefore we have more cause to apply it according to the chief intention and design of this *Epistle*; but he saith nothing before, what *Penitents* were to be reconciled; and after what time, and under what Conditions they were to have *hands laid on them* in token of Reconciliation. And there is no concurrent *Evidence* of such a Practice, so early in the Christian Church.

(4.) The following words are capable of a very good meaning, according to this Sense. For then *being partaker of other men's Sins*, doth imply, that as it is a Fault in those who rudely, and inconsiderately without due preparation of mind, do rush upon so Sacred an Office; so those cannot acquit themselves of a great share in their Guilt, who do not use their best endeavours, by due *Examination* and *Trial* of the Persons, to keep them from entring upon it, till they are prepared and qualified for it.

(5.) The great use of the *laying on of hands* in the *New Testament*, is for the setting Persons apart for the discharge of a Sacred Office. So, when the Office of *Deacons* was first instituted, it is said, *They were set before the Apostles, and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them*. And which is more considerable, when *Barnabas* and *Paul*, by the particular appointment of the *Holy Ghost*, were to be separated unto the *Work* whereto God had called them; it is said, *And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away*. Here it was not for *miraculous Cures*, as the *Apostles* sometimes used it to Sick Persons; nor for conferring *miraculous Gifts* of the *Holy Ghost*, as at other times they used it; (and probably this was the *Gift of God* which *Timothy* had, by *laying on of the Apostles hands*;) neither was it a mere *Rite of Benediction*, as *Jacob* laid his hands on the *Sons of Joseph*; and our *Saviour* on the *Children* when he blessed them; but it was a solemn *Rite of Dedication* of particular Persons to God, when they are set apart for the Exercise of a Function which immediately related to his Service. I confess, that among the *Jews*, it was not used in the *Consecration* of *Priests*; For, *Aaron* and his sons were to lay their hands on the *Sacrifices* that were offered on that occasion, and particularly on the *Ram of Consecration*; but the Ceremony was performed by putting some part of the *Ram*, and the *Cakes*, and the *Wafer* upon *Aaron's hands*, and his *Sons hands*. For the *Priesthood* of the Law being a *Work of the hands*, the Ceremony was very fitly applied to them; but that of the *Gospel* being more intellectual

lectual and spiritual, *the laying on of hands on the Head* of the Persons devoted thereto, was more agreeable to the design of it. And this was an ancient Custom among the *Jews* in employments of the highest nature. So *Moses* laid his hands on *Joshua*; and then it is said, *that he was full of the Spirit of Wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him: and from hence it came to be an usual Ceremony among the Jews, in the Solemn Designation of Persons for Sacred employments, either to be Rulers or Teachers in their Synagogues.* And from thence it was not only brought into the *Christian Church*, but made use of to express that *Right and Authority* which Persons do receive together with it, for the *Exercise and Discharge* of their *Ministerial Function*. Numb. 27.  
18. 23.  
Deut. 34. 9

So that from these Words, there are Three things considerable to be spoken to.

(I.) The *Nature* of the *Office* to which they are ordained, *by laying on of hands*.

(II.) The *Authority* here supposed in *Timothy*, to admit Persons to this *Office*, *by laying on of hands*.

(III.) The great *Care* and *Circumspection* necessary for the right performing it; *Lay hands suddenly on no man*.

(I.) The *Nature* of the *Office*; which may relate both to *Bishops* and *Deacons* before mention'd; But the principal parts of that *Office*, which is here chiefly meant, are by *St. Paul* said to be these two; *Ruling well*, v. 17 and *Labouring in the Word and Doctrine*.

(I.) *Ruling well*; Not, in opposition to *Timothy*, who was to *Rule them well*, nor so as to imply, that the entire Power of Government was lodged in a *College of Presbyters* then, as *St. Jerome* imagines; for what had *Timothy* then to do in the Governing them? I cannot find any Argument of Force in the *New Testament*, to prove, that ever the *Christian Churches* were under the sole Government of *Presbyters*. For what *St. Jerome* alledgeth, doth by no means prove it: I grant he proves, *That the Name of Bishop and Presbyter were at that time common to the same Persons*; But what then? Suppose the *Bishop* and *Elder* here in *Timothy's* Epistle were the same: Doth this prove, that these Govern'd the Church without *Timothy*? The true Question is not about the Sense of *Words*, but about the *Authority* of these *Bishops* or *Presbyters*, i. e. Whether the whole Care of their Churches were committed to them, without any Superior Jurisdiction? What if it be yielded to *St. Jerome*, Hier. com. m. c. in Epist. ad Tit. *That the Bishops and Deacons at Philippi were no other than the Presbyters and Deacons*; as long as the *Apostle*, either in Person, or by some other appointed by himself, did rule over them? What, if the *Bishops* summon'd to *Miletus*, were no other than the *Pastours and Teachers*? Did Phil. 1. 7. not *St. Paul* himself, at that very time, call them together, and give a Charge and Direction to them, as one who had Authority over them? Act. 20. 28 So that it doth no where appear in Scripture, that the *Presbyters* were invested in the *Supreme Power* over the Church.

But yet they were not excluded from all kind of share in the *Government*, for then they could never be said to *Rule well*, who had nothing at all to do in Government: And those who are under a *Supreme* may 1 Pet. 2. 13. be called *Governours*, and are to be obey'd according to the *Nature* of their  
their

their *Authority*; which doth relate to men in another capacity, and for very different ends from what Civil Government doth.

For the Church is a Society in its Nature, Design, Duties, Offices, Censures, really distinct from any mere Humane Institution. And no Christian who believes that the Kingdom of the *Messias* was to be an external, visible Kingdom, can be of another Opinion. And although Revel. 17. Christ be *the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*, and therefore as Kings 14. 19. 16. they are subject to him; yet that Authority which Christian Kings do exercise over their Subjects, doth not overthrow the Rules and Orders which himself hath establish'd in his Church. For no Power derived from him can void or destroy his own Laws and Institutions. Since then the Church doth subsist by virtue of Christ's own appointment, and that Church is to have peculiar Officers to instruct and govern it, it must follow, that even in a *Christian Kingdom*, the Church is a Society distinct from the Common-wealth.

(2.) *Labouring in the Word and Doctrine.* Not to distinguish them from another sort of *Elders*, whom St. Paul never thought of: For he knew of none but such as were set apart by *laying on of hands*, and therefore dedicated to the Work of the Ministry; and if St. Paul's *Bishop* and *Elder* were the same, they must have the same *qualifications*; and one of the chief of them is, *that he be apt to teach*; so that they may as 1 Tim. 3. 2. well plead for a *Lay-Bishop*, as for a *Lay-Elder*; or else the *Elder* must be *one apt to teach*, if the same with the *Bishop*.

But some may say, "There was then indeed great need of *labouring in the Word and Doctrine*, when the Christian Doctrine was not well known, or understood in the World; But what necessity is there of it now, when all People own the Profession of Christianity among us? And this continual Preaching doth but fill the People's heads with too much Knowledge, and makes them more opinionative, and less capable of being governed."

To which I answer,

If *Christ* appointed Preachers only for the Conversion of Infidels, this Argument would have great force: But the Apostle tells us, That Christ Ephes. 4. hath appointed in his Church, not only *Apostles and Evangelists, but Pastors and Teachers*; for the perfecting of the Saints, and for the edifying 11, 12. of the Body of *Christ*, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of *Christ*. Therefore as long as the Church is in its u. 13. imperfect State, as long as it may want Unity or Knowledge, or Improvement, this Office of Teachers is to continue. And those *Elders* will still deserve *double honour*, who do not perfunctorily and rarely discharge this Duty, but who do *labour in the Word and Doctrine*.

There are indeed many sorts of Preaching, which the Church stands in need of, because they tend so little to Edification: Such are all fine Harangues in the Pulpit, *i. e.* Words well put together without suitable Matter; All dry, flat, insipid Discourses, about things of so great consequence to Men's Salvation; All affectations of lingling Sentences; Far-fetched Allusions, Elaborate Trifles; All impertinent Disputes about needless, vain, intricate Controversies; All Enthusiastick unintelligible Talk, which tend to confound Men's Notions of Religion, and to evaporate the true Spirit of it into Fancies and Eastern Modes of speaking:

Lastly,

Lastly, All Corrupt and Seditious Doctrine, which poisons the Minds of People with dangerous Errours, or Factious Principles.

But setting all these aside, there remains a Grave, Serious, Pious, Affectionate, Convincing way of Preaching; which is profitable, in its degree, for the same ends for which the holy Scripture is useful, viz. *for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness*, i. e. <sup>2 Tim. 3. 16.</sup> for the best purposes in the World. And can any think such a Work to be now unnecessary, as long as men have Consciences to be awaken'd, Errours to be confuted, Vices to be reform'd, and stand so much in need of good direction in the way to Heaven?

Can we be employ'd about a better or more useful Work than this? While the Souls of those under our Care, are in such perpetual danger, either of being over-spread with Errours, or overcome with Temptations, or over-set with Difficulties, or over-whelmed with Fears? When should the Pilots shew their Skill and Courage, and Diligence, but when the Sea is rough, and the Weather tempestuous, and Banks of Sand appear on the one side, and Rocks on the other, and so many Wrecks before them; and the common Mariners are bold and unskilful, unable to govern, and impatient of being govern'd? Is it time then to say, There is no need of Pilots now, but they may lie in their Cabias and sleep, for the Ship will steer it self well enough, and the Mariners cannot fail of their Duty, as long as the Coasts are known, and the Rocks have been discover'd to them.

It is very true, that the way to Heaven is not now hard to find; but it is no easie matter to bring men to look in earnest after it, or to keep them in it. And here lies the main of our Work of Preaching; We are not to teach men new Doctrines, but to Clear, Defend and Apply the old, to the Consciences of men. It is very easie to shoot over the People's heads, and to spend an hour to little or no purpose; but it requires all our skill to Preach plainly without flatness; and to set the matters of Religion in the best light, and to recommend them to the minds of People, with the greatest force of Persuasion. It is no hard matter to trifle away the time, but it is so to speak Suitably, Warmly and Effectually to the Hearts of our hearers; to make them find the same effect of our Preaching, which the two Disciples did, when Christ unknown was discoursing with them; *When they said to one another, Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us, and while he open'd to us the Scriptures?* <sup>Luk. 24. 32.</sup> That is then the best way of Preaching, which hath Light and Heat together; which clears the Scriptures to the People's Capacities, and warms their Affections to Spiritual things. And it is hardly possible to mistake, as to the best Method of Preaching, if men do but judge aright concerning the End and Design of it. For there must be Strength and Clearness to convince; and a close Application to Men's Consciences, to excite and persuade them to the Practice of those things which men can hardly be ignorant of, and yet are very backward to do. And therefore this must be the chief Work and Business of our Preaching.

Which none ought to undervalue or be asham'd of, who do in earnest believe God and another World; none ought to neglect, whose peculiar Office and Dignity it is to take Care of Men's Souls; and none will be careless in it, who have a regard to their own or others Soul. *For in doing this,* <sup>1 Tim. 4. 16.</sup> saith St. Paul to Timothy, speaking of his diligence in his Function, *Thou shalt both save thy self and them that hear thee;* as though  
a Man's

a Man's own Salvation, and that of his Hearers, went together. That is indeed the most desirable thing in the World to be the Instruments of carrying Souls to Heaven; for they who convert many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever: but yet, the most careful Endeavours do not always meet with Success; and even our Blessed Saviour's Preaching, who spake as never man spake, was ineffectual to many; (What then may we expect!) But this is our Duty, and the most likely way of doing good to Souls, as appears by our Saviour's own Practice; and if we do not meet with success to our desires, let us not give over doing our Duty; and say, *We have labour'd in vain, and spent our strength for nought and in vain*; for surely our judgment is with the Lord, and our Work with our God, as the Prophet speaks; and if we fail of a Recompence in this World, we shall not in another.

II. And so I come from the Nature of the Office, to the Authority of Conferring it; these words implying it to belong to Timothy, as being spoken particularly to him, *Lay hands suddenly on no man*. For although he often speaks of the Bishops and Elders before; yet he gives no charge about Ordination, but only to Timothy.

True, some say, in this particular Case; but this was by virtue of an Extraordinary Commission given to him, as an Evangelist by St. Paul: But what is this to the standing Rule and Practice of the Church in succeeding Ages? which is not to be govern'd by such Precedents; unless the Succession in the same Office be made appear in the following Bishops of the several Churches.

To make this Matter as clear as I can, I shall recommend these things to consideration.

(I. Consider.) That from hence appears evidently, That the Apostolical Power of Governing Churches, and Ordaining Elders in them, was not limited to the Persons of the Apostles; but was capable of being communicated to others whom the Apostle entrusted with it. And this is a very material Point, to prove, that this Power was not so peculiar to the Apostles, but it might be transmitted to others, and therefore might be continued in the Church.

But the great Objection against Timothy's being a Pattern for Episcopal Power is this; That it appears by Scripture, he was sent up and down to several Places, as St. Paul thought fit. For he took him into his attendance at (a) Lystra; from whence he accompanied him through (b) Phrygia, Galatia, Macedonia, and (c) (there from Philippi to Thessalonica and Berea.) And when he went to Athens, he (d) sent for Timothy to him, and sent him from thence back to Thessalonica; and he returned from (e) Macedonia to him (f) at Corinth. From thence St. Paul went into (g) Syria, and so to (h) Ephesus, and there again he sent Timothy into (i) Macedonia with Erastus; (k) whither St. Paul went afterwards himself. And upon his return to Miletus, he speaks to the Elders, and not to Timothy, as their Bishop. From hence, they say, St. Paul took him to Jerusalem, and so to Rome, as appears by the Epistles written from thence.

From this Series of the Story they conclude Timothy to have been only an Evangelist, and not a fixt Bishop.

To which I answer; That the frequent removes of *Timothy*, before this *Epistle* to him at *Ephesus*, are not material to this purpose. But it is very material to consider, what Power of Government *St. Paul* then committed to him. Which is a certain proof, that such a Power was not so peculiar to the *Apostles*, by vertue of their immediate Commission from *Christ*, but it might be delegated to others in their stead. Whether for a longer or shorter time, whether while the *Apostles* went up and down, or near their Decease, makes no difference, as to the point of Delegation. And if it be granted, that such an Apostolical Power of Governing Churches might be committed to others and was actually so by the *Apostles*, then there is no more to be done, but to enquire, whether upon their Remove, or Departure, they did entrust any Persons in such a manner, as it is certain from Scripture *St. Paul* did *Timothy*, as to the Churches of *Asia*, when he went into *Macedonia*.

Some think, that *St. Paul's* leaving *Timothy* at *Ephesus*, was upon his return out of *Macedonia*, when he was going up to *Jerusalem*, knowing that they should see his face no more; and that while he staid for him at *Troas*, he sent this *Epistle* to him. But *St. Paul's* words are too plain to be avoided, that he left him at *Ephesus*, Προβύβριστο: εις Μακεδονίαν, which can never be interpreted returning from *Macedonia*. And there was as much need of one to look after the Churches of *Asia*, when *St. Paul* was then absent in *Macedonia*, as when he went to *Jerusalem*: and so (l) (1) *Theodor. Præ. fat. in Epist. Pauli: Act. 20. 4, 5.* *Theodoret* understands it. But if *Timothy* were then with *St. Paul*, as appears by his being at (m) *Troas*, when he went from thence to *Miletus*, that was sufficient Reason why he did not address himself to him, but to the *Elders* which came from *Ephesus*; whom he put in mind of their Duty by his *Speech*, as he had done *Timothy* by an *Epistle* not long before directed to him.

Whose Office was no more superseded by this Charge given to them, than a *Proconsul's* was by the *Senates* Instructions to his *Legates*, when himself was present.

If it were evidently proved, that *St. Paul* then carried away *Timothy* with him to *Jerusalem*, and so to *Rome*, there would be greater force in the Objection. But how doth that appear? Not from Scripture. For when *St. Paul* appeared at the Temple, the *Jews* laid hold on him, because they supposed (n) he had brought *Trophimus* the *Ephesian* with him into the Temple, whom they had seen so much with him in the City. How came *Timothy* not to be as much taken notice of, if he were there? For, he being discovered by the *Jews* of *Asia*, there was far greater Reason for them to have raised a Tumult about *Timothy*, than about *Trophimus*. (n) *Act. 21. 29.*

After this, we find (o) *St. Paul* kept two years in Prison, and not a word of *Timothy*, whom we may justly suppose exercising his Charge all that time at *Ephesus*. When *St. Paul* was carried to *Rome*, we find not *Timothy* in his Company; no mention being made of him till he wrote the *Epistles* to the (p) *Philippians* and (q) *Colossians*, and then *Timothy* was with him. For *St. Paul* had sent for him from *Ephesus* in his (r) Second *Epistle*; where, in all probability, he remained till that time. During his stay at *Rome* those *Epistles* were written, as likewise that to *Philemon*, and to the *Hebrews*; in which it is said, (s) That he had been Imprison'd and was then at Liberty; and intended shortly to return into the Eastern Parts. From hence forwards we read nothing of *Timothy* in Scripture. (o) *Act. 24. 27.* (p) *Phil. 1. 1.* (q) *Coloss. 1. 1.* (r) *2 Tim. 4. 9.* (s) *Heb. 13. 23.*

But (t) *St. Jerome* himself makes him *Bishop of the Ephesians*, and so doth (u) *Eusebius* in *Ca. 11.*

(u) Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 3. c. 4. (u) *Eusebius*; (x) *Theodoret* calls him, *The Apostle of those in Asia*; and St. (y) *Chrysostome* saith, *The whole People of Asia were committed to his Charge*, i. e. of this *Proconsular Asia*, which lay about *Ephesus*.

And now let any reasonable Man consider, whether there be not sufficient Proof, that the Apostolical Power of Governing Churches was communicated to others besides the *Apostles* themselves; and consequently there might be a Succession in that Power, in as many as the *Apostles* thought fit.

(z) *Walo* It is confessed by some (z) *That there were Secondary Apostles, such as besides Timothy and Titus, Linus, Clemens and Epaphroditus are said to have been*; but these are called *Itinerant Preachers*, and not fixed *Bishops*.

But the same Persons observe from (a) *Theodoret*, not only that these were called *Bishops* afterwards; but that the Reason why St. Paul wrote *Epistles* to some, and not to others, was, because some he took with him, and others he entrusted with the Government of Churches. *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ ἐπιτομή*, which can hardly agree to *Itinerant Preachers*.

But it is said, *These Secondary Apostles were not sent by Christ, but by the Apostles*. And what then? Would the *Apostles* betray their Trust, and commit part of that charge to others, which was entrusted only to themselves? But if this Office were by the Will of Christ appropriated to the Persons of the *Apostles*, they could not commit it to others without breach of Trust. And if it were not so, then this Power might be communicated to as many as the *Apostles* judged convenient; and so (as I said before) we have nothing farther to do, but to enquire, whether at their removal from particular Churches, they did not put this Power into the Hands of others.

(II. *Consid.*) Whether the *Apostles*, upon their withdrawing, did pass this Power over to others, as St. Paul did plainly in the Case of *Timothy* and *Titus*, is a matter of Fact; and to be proved in such a manner as such a thing is capable of. We find plainly, the *Apostles* had this Power in themselves, and did convey it to some others; but whether *Universally*, and with a design to continue this Order, must be proved by the best means we can do a matter of Fact of so great Antiquity.

(III. *Consid.*) There can be no stronger Proof of such a matter of Fact, than the general sense of the *Christian Church* in the Ages next succeeding the *Apostles*.

Now, as to the finding out the general sense of the *Church*, as to this matter, I shall premise Three things.

(1.) It is not necessary to prove from *Scripture*, that the *Apostles* did observe the same method in all Churches; which we find, as to the Churches of *Ephesus* and *Crete*. For we have no such particular account, as to the other Churches; but we are certain St. Paul would do no irregular thing, nor communicate an Office to others, which was to expire with themselves.

(2.) It is not at all necessary, to prove, that all the *Bishops* mention'd in *Scripture* had this *Apostolical Power*; for the contrary appears in the *Bishops* under *Timothy* and *Titus*; and therefore the Succession is not to be drawn from the *Bishops* mentioned in the *Epistles* to them, but from themselves; the want of considering this one Point, hath caused more



more perplexity in the Controversie about *Episcopacy*, than any one thing besides.

(3.) It is not necessary that the *Succession* in this *Apostolical Power* be made equally clear in all *Churches*; since the *Records* of the Church may be more doubtfull and defective in some Churches which are not in others. But yet there are these ways to make out the general Sense of the Christian Church as to this point.

(1.) That the Evidence of the *Succession* is clear in the most conspicuous Churches, by undoubted Testimonies.

(2.) That those who seem'd most doubtfull about the first *Succession*, do yield the *general Consent* of the Church in the Practice of it.

(1.) As to the undoubted Testimonies of this *Succession* in the most conspicuous Churches; I shall first appeal to *Irenæus* and *Tertullian* as least liable to Exception. The former not only mentions a *Succession* of *Persons* to the *Apostles*; but he saith, \* *The Apostles committed the Care of the Churches to them; and left them to succeed in their Places*: Which implies that as the *Apostles* themselves had the Care of the Church, so they committed it to the *Bishops* whom they chose to succeed them. *Tertullian* not only mentions those in general who succeeded the *Apostles*, but particularly instanceth in *Polycarp*, placed by *St. John* at *Smyrna*; and *Clemens*, by *St. Peter* at *Rome*; and then adds, † *That the other Churches had Bishops placed in them like to these*. So that what Authority *Polycarp* had at *Smyrna*, or *Clemens* at *Rome*, that *Tertullian* affirms the *Bishops* had in other Churches. Now *Irenæus* saith, That *Clemens* had *Episcopatum administranda Ecclesie*, i. e. the *Episcopal Power* of governing the Church which the *Apostles* delivered to them. And *St. Chrysostome* saith of *Ignatius*, That he received the Government of that Church from the *Apostles* own hands. And the Commentator on the *Apocalypse*, under *St. Ambrose's* Name, calls the *Angels of the Seven Churches*, *The Governours of those Churches*. From all which, we may justly infer, That this *Succession* was not in mere *Presidency of Order*, but that the *Bishops* succeeded the *Apostles* in the Government over those Churches. But as *Theodoret* well observes, The Name of *Apostles* was not continued, out of Reverence to the *Apostles*; but the Name of *Bishops* was then appropriated to the *Successours* of the *Apostles*; Which alteration of the Name, hath proved another great Occasion of the Confusion in this Controversie. But that the *Bishops* did succeed the *Apostles* we have the general Consent of the Ancient || *Fathers*, who were the most competent Witnesses in this Case; which is an Argument, they believed the *Apostolical Power*, with respect to the Government of Churches, did not expire with the *Apostles*, but was to continue, as long as *Christ* had promised to be with them, i. e. to the end of the World.

(2.) That those who seem'd most doubtfull about the *Original* of *Episcopacy*, do yield the general consent of the Church in the Practice of it. Some few of the *Ancients* must be allowed to have had singular fancies and opinions of their own, about this matter. And the not yielding this, hath been another great Advantage to the *Enemies* of *Episcopacy*.

\* Qui ab Apostolis ipsis instituti sunt Episcopi in Ecclesiis — quibus etiam ipsas Ecclesias committiebant — quos & Successores relinquebant, suum ipsorum locum Magisterii tradentes. Iren. l. 3. c. 3.

† Proinde utique & ceteræ exhibent quos ab Apostolis in Episcopatum constitutos Apostolici seminis tradentes habeant. Tertull. de præscript. c. 32.

Theod. ad Tim. c. 3.

|| Cyprian. Epist. 3. 66. ad Ox. Hier. in Psal. 44. ad Evagr. Ep. 85. ad Marcellam. Aug. in Psal. 44. Ambros. in Eph. 4. 11. & in 1 Cor. 12. 28.

Mat. 28. 20.

But, as to those few among the Fathers, who have advanced singular Opinions about the *first Government of Churches*, I desire these things may be observ'd.

(1.) That it is no wonder there should be different Opinions about the Beginnings of things; which are generally very obscure; and therefore thinking Men are apt to frame different *Hypotheses* about them. As about the Original of Civil Government; some founding it in Dominion and Property; others on Consent of the People; others in a Natural Right of Sovereignty, which one preserves, and the rest part with; others in Primogeniture; and lastly, others most reasonably in Divine Providence and Institution. Whilst these things lie only in *Speculation*, a difference of Opinions is hard to be prevented, and of no such ill consequence to the World: but if Men, from those *Speculations*, draw such Inferences as tend to disturb the Peace of the World, and to withdraw Men from Obedience to Government; then such Opinions are to be looked on as Dangerous and Seditious, and care must be taken to prevent their spreading. So here about the rise of *Episcopal Government*, if the Question were only a matter of Curiosity, *Whether the Apostles did first try the Experiment of Presbyters governing in common, and upon the inconveniences of that Government set up Bishops*, as St. Jerome seems to think; or, *Whether there were at first a Succession in Course*, as another of the Ancients imagin'd, *till the inconveniences of that made a Choice necessary*: If it went no farther than bare *Speculations*, though these Opinions may be both false, yet they are not dangerous: But when any from hence infer, the Episcopal Government to be an Usurpation, and that Men are bound to restore the Right of Presbyters in opposition to them, notwithstanding the Universal Consent of the Church from the Apostles times; then such Opinions change their Nature, and become mischievous in their Consequences.

Sub Nomi-  
ne Ambrosii.  
in c. 4. ad  
Ephes.

Hieron. in  
Epist. ad E-  
vagr. 85.

(2.) It is a great Argument against these singular Opinions, that they contradict each other; and therefore the General Sense of the Church is to be preferr'd before them. For St. Jerome affirms, *That from St. Mark's time, in the Church of Alexandria, the Presbyters always chose one of their Body, whom they made their Bishop*: So that no such thing could ever be practis'd there, as a *Succession in Course*, which the other affirms. And as it is the great Advantage of Monarchy, that it had the General Consent of Mankind in the Eldest times; and that those who would set up Popular Government, differ so much in the First Principles and Fundamentals of it; So it is as to the Government of the Church by Bishops, that even these who differ about the First Form, yet agree in the early Change, and the Universal Consent in it.

(3.) If St. Jerome be understood of the setting up Episcopacy in the *Apostolical Churches*, after the Apostles times, and a trial then made of Governing by Presbyters, he cannot be excused from contradicting himself as well as the rest of the Fathers. For what Experiment was there of that kind in the *Church of Alexandria*, if from *St. Mark's time, the Presbyters set up one above themselves, as an Army making choice of a General*; which are his own Expressions? Will any Man say, an Army is Governed by a Council of Inferiour Officers, when they have a General over them, though of their own choosing? So in the *Church of Jerusalem*, he saith, *St. James was the first Bishop*; How was that Church then Governed by a *College of Presbyters*? At *Ephesus*, he confesses *Timothy* was Bishop there; and *Titus* in *Crete*. At *Rome*, he makes *Linus*

Hieron. ad  
Gal. 2. &  
in Script.  
Eccles.  
In Catalog

and

and Clemens to succeed in the Bishoprick there. At Antioch, he saith Ignatius was Bishop, and he owns his Epistles, and surely there is nothing like the sole Government by Presbyters in them. At Symrna, he saith Polycarp was appointed Bishop, and had care of the Churches of Asia. Where then according to St. Jerome, is this Government by Presbyters to be found after the Apostles times?

(4.) No Man lays down greater Reasons for the Change of this Government, that St. Jerome doth. For he saith, *That Episcopacy was found necessary to prevent Schisms and Disorders, and tearing the Church in Pieces.* What could be said more to the Advantage of any Government than that it was brought in upon the best Reason for Government in the World, *viz. the preserving of Peace and Order in the Church?* We need not carry the matter so far, as to make St. Jerome charge the Apostles with *Indiscretion* before, in not preventing the first Occasion of Schisms. For he might think, the Presbyters would have thought themselves hardly dealt with, to be excluded from Government till the Experiment were tried, and the Confusions following convinced themselves of the Necessity of a Superiour, and so made them more willing to submit. St. Jerome seems to have had the same kind of Notion of Church-Government, which others have of the beginnings of Civil-Government, *viz.* That at first there was a *State of War among Mankind*, and the inconveniences of that made Men willing to part with their own Rights for the sake of Peace; so these Presbyters, finding so much Disorder and Confusion, by being left to themselves, were far better contented to yield to such Government as would best keep the Church in Peace.

(5.) St. Jerome yields, that this Alteration of Government did *Universally obtain.* For nothing less than that can be meant by his *In toto orbe decretum est*: He doth not speak clearly, whether he means a Decree of the Apostles to bind the Church, or a General Consent; but whichsoever be meant, he supposes no difference, or opposition about it. If he had said it was done by the Apostles in plain terms, he had taken away the force of his own Argument, which goes upon the *Apostles Times*; but yet it is hard to conceive how such an alteration should happen without the *Apostles Act*. For, if they had left the Presbyters in full Power of Government, it is not to be imagin'd, they would so universally part with it, without being obliged thereto, by those who had Authority over them; but this St. Jerome leaves to be gather'd by the Event.

(6.) St. Jerome never supposes this Alteration to have been made against any Institution of Christ. All that he saith, is, *That there was a time when the Presbyters were left to themselves, and so did Govern the Church by common Consent.* And at that time the Apostles writing to them suppose a Bishop and Presbyter the same: but he never saith that Christ had appointed, that none should be set over them. For then there could be no Alteration without Violation of a Law of Christ, which he could never suppose would so universally obtain without opposition. And he never dreamt the setting up of this Government to be any part of the *Mystery of Iniquity then working*; unless he could imagine the preserving the Peace of the Church to be it. On the contrary, St. Jerome makes this Government in the very same Places to bear an Analogy to

Aaron

*Quod autem postea unus electus est, qui ceteris proponeretur in Schismatis remedium factum est, ne unusquisque ad se erahens Christi Ecclesiam rumpere. Ad Evag.*

*Ut unus de Presbyteris electus superponeretur ceteris, ad quem omnis Ecclesie cura perlineret, & Schismatum semina tollerentur. In Comment. ad Tit.*

*Aaron and his Sons, and the Levites in the Temple, to Moses and the LXX Elders under the Law:* and in other places out of the heat of Dispute, when the Roman Deacons were not in his head, he makes the Bishops the Successours of the Apostles. But if they had come in by Usurpation, he would have called them the Successours of *Simon Magus, of Diotrephes, of Caiaphas,* and according to his warm manner of Expression, of *Lucifer* himself.

*Fuerunt, O Ecclesia, Apostoli Patres tui— Nunc quia illi recesserunt: à mundo, habes pro his Episcopos filios, quia te creati sunt; sunt enim & hi Patres tui, quia ab ipsis regeris. Comment. ad Psal. 44. Ceterum omnes Apostolorum Successores sunt. Ad Evagr. Apud nos Apostolorum locum Episcopi tenent. Ad Marcellam.*

(7) *St. Jerome* concludes this Alteration to have been made on such good grounds, that all persons are bound to submit to it, and to be subject to the Bishops as their *Spiritual Governours:* Nay, he makes the *Peace and Welfare of the Church* to depend upon it. And nothing more can be said in that respect for any Government, than even *St. Jerome* speaks for *Episcopacy.*

*Esto subditus Pontifici tuo & quasi Animum & Parentem suscipie. Ad Nepotian.*

*Nec hoc dico quod istiusmodi Gradibus in Ecclesia non debeat esse subiecti. Quicumque enim maledixerit. Patri aut Matri morte morietur. Et Apostolus docet Præpositis in Ecclesia obediendum. In Mich. c. 7.*

*Ecclesia Solus in summi Sacerdotis Dignitate pendet, cui si non Exors quædam & ab omnibus eminens detur potestas, tot in Ecclesiis efficiuntur Schismata, quot Sacrodotes. Advers. Luciferianos.*

(IV. *Consid.*) The Universal Consent of the Church being proved, there is as great Reason to believe, the *Apostolical Succession* to be of *Divine Institution,* as the *Canon of Scripture,* or the *Observation of the Lord's Day.* We do not doubt but it is unlawfull to add to, or to diminish from the *Canon of Scripture;* and yet there is no plain Text for it, with respect to all the Books contained in it; and some of the Books were a long time disputed in some Churches; but the Churches coming at last to a full Agreement in this matter, upon due search and enquiry, hath been thought sufficient to bind all after-Ages to make no Alterations in it. And as to the *Divine Institution* of the *Lord's Day,* we do not go about to lessen it, but only to shew, that some Examples in Scripture being joined with the *Universal Practice* of the Church in its purest Ages, hath been allowed to be sufficient ground not only for following Ages to observe it, but to look on it as at least an *Apostolical Institution.* Now it cannot but seem unequal, not to allow the same Force, where there is the same Evidence. And therefore our Church hath wisely and truly determined, *That since the Apostle's times there have been three Orders, of Bishops, Priests and Deacons;* and in a Regular, well constituted Church, are to continue to the World's End.

III. The last thing to be spoken to, is the *Care and Circumspection* necessary in admitting Persons to the Exercise of this holy Function here mention'd, *Lay hands suddenly on no man.* And that will appear very reasonable on these accounts, because the *Welfare* of the Church, the *Honour of Religion,* and the *Salvation of Men's Souls* depend so much upon those who are admitted to holy Orders; and therefore it is not only *Negligence* and *Stupidity,* but *Unfaithfulness* to the *Trust* reposed in them, if through their Fault they suffer unfit Men to take upon them to be the Ministers of holy things.

(I.) The *Welfare* of the Church is so much concerned in it. It is true, some have higher Places, greater Authority, more powerfull Influence on the State of the Church than others have; but yet every Wheel must be in its due Order and Motion, or the whole may be easily disturbed.

sturbed. A loose, irregular Clergy have so great Influence on the Minds of some People, with respect to the whole Church, that they will never think well of that Church where such Persons are employ'd. For they will not distinguish the Good and Bad, where it is more suitable to their Interest, and Prejudices not to do it.

And we find, by too sad Experience, if those who are disaffected to our Church have met with unfit Persons in their Places, though very obscure and remote, what perpetual Clamour they make with it all their Lives after; and what Insinuations are given, that the rest were alike; and this is still pleaded, how unjustly soever, as the most popular Argument for Separation. So that a Scandalous Clergy-man doth unspeakable Mischief, not only to his own and others Souls, but to the whole Church he owns himself to be of. And very many good Examples do not signify so much to the Benefit of a Church, as a few bad ones do to the Mischief of it.

(2.) The *Honour of Religion* lies at stake too; which suffers very much, when those who pretend to Teach others the way to Heaven, are seen going themselves, and drawing others into the broad Way to Destruction. Our Preaching to the People their Duties, doth but make them more narrowly watch and observe our Lives, to see whether we live agreeably to the Directions we give them. And if we slight in our Practice what we Preach in the Pulpit, if we act our selves just contrary to what we require from them, it will be hardly possible to convince them we are in earnest, and believe any thing of Religion our selves. And how can we imagine they should regard what we say in the Pulpit, if they plainly see we regard it not our selves when we are out of it? It was *Aristotle's* observation long ago; That it is not what Men Fab. Quint. tit. l. 2. 62. 16. l. 12. c. 1. speak, which moves the People so much, as the Opinion they have of the Person that speaks: and therefore the Orators of old put into the Definition of one fit to perswade the People, that he must have *the Reputation of a good Man*; otherwise all he speaks will be thought only Art or Design.

I know no way to have the Reputation of a good Man, like being so: and we are infinitely more concerned to be so, than those, whose great Business was to put false Colours upon things. We speak the Words of Truth and Soberness; let us not then make the People question them, by not finding the due effects of them in our own Conversations. They are very apt to suspect we look on Preaching as our Trade, and mind it no more than *the Silver-smiths did the Shrines they made for Diana*, Act 29. 24. which they set off to the best advantage, not for the Reverence they had for *Diana*, but for the Gain she brought to the Crafts-men. We have no such effectual way to convince our Auditors, that we mean what we say, as when they find us to be great Examples our selves of the Duties we press upon them, *viz.* of Devotion, Humility, Charity, Sobriety, Mortification, Contentedness, Peaceableness, and Universal Holiness: and when the People see our *Light shining before them, by the good Works we do*, we shall thereby excite them to glorify God, to think better of Religion, and to follow our Example.

(3.) The *Salvation of Men's Souls* depends very much upon the *Care and Conduct* of those who are to be their Guides to Heaven. For, if they lead them astray, whom they think they are bound to follow, their destruction will be unavoidable. *When the blind lead the blind, they both fall into the Ditch*; but yet the blind leader falls first, and

and falls heaviest and deepest, and the other falls upon him, and sinks him lower. It is a sad thing to have the Guilt of other Men's sins, as well as our own to answer for; when by our wilful Neglect of our known Duty, or by our Examples, or by our Erroneous Doctrine, we prove the occasion of damning those Souls, which were committed to our Charge to conduct them to Heaven.

The Care of *Souls* would be a dreadful thing indeed, if we were to answer for all the Miscarriages of the People committed to our Charge: But if they are such as happen through the voluntary and plain Omission of the Duty laid upon us; or our being accessory to their Commission of them, they may be justly charged on our Account.

With what *Care* and *Caution* then ought all Persons to enter upon so weighty, so holy, so tremendous a Charge? What Preparation of Mind is necessary to consider it! What *Fasting* and *Prayer* to obtain God's Assistance in it! What *Wisdom*, and *Piety*, and *Resolution* to discharge it!

But let us not be disheartned; we serve a Gracious Master, and in the best Employment; and although we may meet with many Difficulties, within and without, and on all sides, yet *let us be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, for as much as we know, that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

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# SERMON XXIII.

Preached at

## WHITE-HALL,

February 19. 168<sup>5</sup>/<sub>6</sub>.

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St. LUKE XV. 18.

*I will arise and go to my Father, and will say to him,  
Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before  
thee.*

**I**N the foregoing Verse, we find the Prodigal Son so far awakened and *come to himself*, as to be sensible of the miserable Condition he had brought himself into by his own folly and wickedness. But, before he came to this, there is a remarkable Turn in the Course of his Life, set down by our Saviour in the beginning of this excellent Parable. For, he was first very impatient of being under the wise Conduct of his Father, and thought he could manage his own Affairs far more to his Contentment and Satisfaction, if he were but permitted to use his Liberty, and were not so strictly tyed up to the grave and formal Methods of living, observed and required in his Father's House. Which might pass for Wisdom in Age, and be agreeable enough to such whose Life and Vigour were decayed; and who were now to maintain their Authority over their Children by seeming to be so much wiser than they: But it is a rare thing for Youth and Age to agree in the Opinion of Wisdom: For it is not the Care, the Experience, the Judgment of a wise and tender Father, that can allay the Heats, or calm the Passions, or overrule the violent Inclinations of Youth; but whatever it cost them afterwards, some will be still trying the Experiment, whether it doth not more conduce to the happiness of Life to pursue their own Fancies and Designs, than to hearken to another's Directions (though a Father's) whose Circumstances are so much different from their own. Thus our Blessed Saviour represents in the Parable this young Prodigal, as weary of being rich and easie at Home, and fond of seeing the Pleasures of the World: and therefore nothing would satisfy him unless he were intrusted with the Stock which was intended for him, that he might shew the difference between his Fathers Conduct and his own.

And this very soon appear'd; for this hopeful Manager had not been long abroad, *but he wasted his substance with riotous living.* And to make him the more sensible of his Folly, there happened a more than ordinary Scarcity, which made his low and exhausted Condition more uneasie to him. But the Sense of Shame was yet greater with him than that of his Folly; and whatever shifts he underwent, he would by no means yet think of returning home; but rather chose to submit to the meanest and basest Employment in hopes to avoid the Necessity of it. But at last, Reason and Consideration began to work upon him, which is called, *his coming to himself*: and then he takes up a Resolution to go home to his Father, and to throw himself at his Feet, to confess his fault ingenuously and freely, and to beg pardon for his former Folly, in hopes of Forgiveness and Reconciliation. *I will arise and go to my Father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee.*

Under this Parable, our Saviour sets forth the state of a Sinner, (1.) In his wilful degeneracy from God, his Father, both by Creation and Providence; his uneasiness under his just and holy Laws; his impatience of being restrained by them; his casting off the Bonds of Duty to him; and running into all kind of Disorders without regard to God, or his own Soul. (2.) In the dissatisfaction he found in his evil Courses; being very much disappointed in the great Expectations he had in the Pleasures of Sin; wasting his health, interest, reputation, estate, and above all, the Peace and Tranquility of his Mind, which was more valuable than any other Delight whatsoever, and he now found impossible to be enjoy'd in a Course of Rebellion against his heavenly Father. (3.) In the Conviction of his Folly upon due Consideration of what he had done; which is Emphatically called *Coming to himself*; having before acted so much below himself, and against himself; unworthy of the Relation he stands in to God; of those Faculties he had bestow'd upon him; and of those hopes and expectations he might have had from him either as to this or another World. (4.) In the Resolution he takes upon this Conviction, no longer to delay his purpose of repenting and returning home, but to embrace the present opportunity of doing it freely, heartily and ingenuously, *I will arise and go to my Father, &c.*

Having formerly in this Place, and on a like Occasion considered the Prodigal Son's *coming to himself*, I shall now pursue the Method of his Repentance in the *Resolution* he here takes *to arise and go to his Father, &c.*

And therein I shall enquire into these things.

I. What grounds a Sinner hath to encourage him to repent: or to form such a Resolution in his Mind *that he will arise and go to his Father*, when he knows he hath so much provoked and offended him.

II. How necessary it is in order to true Repentance to form a fixed and steady Resolution to go through with it, *I will arise and go, &c.*

*First*, What grounds a Sinner hath to encourage him to repent; or to make Application to his Father in order to Forgiveness, since he is convinced he hath so justly offended him. For, if we consider the Circumstances here mention'd, he had no such Reason to hope to be received into Favour upon such easie Terms, as are here expressed; For,

(1.) He



(1.) He had wilfully forsaken his Father's House, without any just Cause of Complaint of any hard usage there.

(2.) He had embraced such a Course of Life, which he knew was displeasing to him, living riotously and disorderly, in a way contrary to his Will.

(3.) He never thought of returning home, till mere Necessity forced him; till Hunger and Poverty made him *come to himself*.

And what could be more disobliging to a Father, than such Circumstances as these?

(1.) His Father never forced him from home, nor made his Condition uneasy there. Our Saviour here represents Almighty God, as dealing with Mankind like a tender and indulgent Father, and not like a severe and hard Master; his Laws being intended for our Good, and not for his own Advantage. There is no Duty of ours towards God, or our selves, or others, but is founded on this Relation to God as a Father to Mankind. Nothing can be more reasonable in general than that the Father should order and direct his Children, and give such Rules which are fitting for them to observe; And if we examine the particular Laws of Nature, or the Dictates of Reason as to Good and Evil, we shall find them very agreeable to God's Paternal Government.

What is the Duty of Prayer to God, but asking daily Blessing of our heavenly Father? What is our Thanksgiving but a solemn owning his Paternal Care and Bounty towards us? And in these two, the main Duties of Natural Religion consist. The Neglect whereof, is such a disrespect to our heavenly Father, as is not consistent with our believing him to be so. For, as God himself argues in the Prophet, *A Son honoureth his Father, and a Servant his Master: If then I be a Father, where is mine Honour? And if I be a Master, where is my Fear?* God was a Father by the Right of Creation and Providence: but he was a Master to the *Jews* in respect of the Bondage of the Law; and as there was a Spirit of Bondage on that account in them, which inclined them to a more servile Fear; so there ought to have been a natural Spirit of Adoption toward God as their Supreme Creatour and Father; which should excite all Men to such a dutiful Love, such a reverential Esteem, such a mixture of Awe and Kindness as is in Children towards their Parents. Yea, it ought to be much greater than that can be supposed; because the Distance is Infinite between God and us; and our Dependence more immediate and necessary; and there is in him a Concurrence of all Perfections, which may cause in us the highest Esteem, and the humblest Adoration. There is an unquestionable Duty owing by Children to their earthly Parents, *but how much rather* (saith the Apostle) *ought we to be in subjection to the Father of Spirits?* The Fathers of our Flesh may be very Kind, but not Wise in their Love; or Wise and not so Kind; or they may be both Wise and Kind, but not able to help their Children. They may love and pity, and pray for them, when they are in Misery, or Sickness and Pain, but after all, they are unable to relieve them; For the most indulgent Father, when his bowels yearn, and his heart is ready to break at the sight of a Child lying under the Agonies of Death, is not able to give a Moments Respite to the terrible Pangs, which he can neither behold nor abate. But our heavenly Father hath not only Infinite Wisdom, but Infinite Kindness and Power; and where all these are joined together, what Honour, what Love, what Fear is due unto him! Although there be defects in their Parents, yet Children are still bound to obey them, and to shew a mighty Regard and Re-

rence towards them; but here it is so much otherwise, that if we could conceive our selves without this Relation to God, yet his Perfections are so many, so great, so infinite, as to deserve and require our utmost Veneration. The Prodigal Son could then have no Reason to complain of the Duty which he owed to his Father.

And was it not fit for him to appoint the Orders of his Family, and to expect that his Children should behave themselves therein, as became the Relation they stood in to himself and to one another? That they should have a decent regard to themselves in Sobriety, Temperance, Command of their Passions, and Care of their Words; That they should behave themselves towards their Brethren with Sincerity, Kindness and Justice; which comprehend all the Duties we owe to one another?

And what now was there in all this, that the Prodigal could have any Cause to complain of, or that should make his Father's House so uneasie to him? But his Father had just Cause to be provoked, when his wise Counsels, and prudent Care, and constant Kindness; and righteous Government were so much slighted and despised by a disobedient and ungrateful Son; who had so little Sense of his Duty or his Interest as to be weary of being so well at home, and therefore impatiently desiring to find out new Methods of living well, as he then thought, when the best Orders of his Father's Family were become so displeasing to him.

(2.) But what were these new and fine Contrivances for his own happiness? He began to suspect his wise Father did not allow his Children liberty enough at home, and that he concealed from him the great Mystery of the Happiness of Life, and therefore concluded, that if he did give way to those Desires which he found to be natural, but his Father thought unreasonable, he should enjoy much more Pleasure and Satisfaction than he did at home. And being resolved upon this, he gives way to those Inclinations he found strongest in himself, denies himself no Pleasures of Life; accounts Vertue but a Name which sows and moses Persons put upon their own humours; and Religion but a Device for Fools to deceive themselves, and Knaves to deceive others by. And so he throws off all checks and restraints upon himself, and never regards the Good or Evil of what he doth, for his Lusts are his Laws, and the satisfaction of them he now looks upon as the only real Happiness of Mankind.

And could any thing be supposed more provoking to his heavenly Father than such a wicked and dissolute way of living? So contrary to his Father's Will, to his own Reason, Conscience, Interest, Reputation; and which soon brought him to shame and Misery?

(3.) But that which added yet more to the height of the Provocation was, that he did not think of returning home to his Father, upon the first apprehension of his own Folly; but he resolved to undergo any difficulty, and submit to any hardship, rather than do what was necessary in order to Reconciliation with his Father.

How hard a Matter then is it to bring an habitual Sinner to Repentance! It is not easie to bring him to any due and serious Conviction of the Evil of his doings; but it is far more difficult to change the inward Disposition of the Mind, and to alter all the great Designs and Pleasures of Life. It is but a mean Notion of Repentance which is apt to prevail in the World, as though it implied no more than some Acts of Contri-  
tion

tion for greater Sins, when the Habit and Disposition remain the same. But true Repentance is the turn of the whole Soul from the Love, as well as the Practice of Sin; and this is not a thing to be done easily or suddenly; a Sinner will bear a great many Checks and Reproofs of Conscience before he will part with his beloved Sins; he will struggle a great while with himself; and endure many Conflicts between an awaken'd Conscience and rooted Inclinations, before the penitent Sinner can assure himself that his Repentance hath had its due and effectual operation upon him. For we see here nothing but extremity brought the Prodigal to himself, and made him at last to resolve *to arise and go to his Father, &c.* As *Themistocles* said of the People of *Athens*, they did by him, as Men commonly do by a great Tree, they run to it for shelter in a Storm, but care not how they use it another Time; that is too true of Sinners with respect to God; when they can make a shift for themselves any other way, they despise Religion; and make God their Refuge only at a Day of Extremity, but not their Choice, when their Conditions please them.

*Ælian. var. hist. l. 9. c. 18.*

But when the Prodigal Son had so slighted his Father, broken his Commands, despised the Advantages he had at home, and was so hardly brought to think of returning thither, how came he now to be so encouraged in his Mind *to arise and go to his Father*, and confess his fault with hopes of being forgiven after all this?

We find no other Account here given, but that he was *his Father*, however he had offended him; and therefore he was resolved he would *arise and go to his Father*; as though there were charms and force enough in that word to answer all Discouragements. Which being an Argument taken from the Bowels of Pity and Compassion which a Father hath towards a relenting Child, we must enquire, how far this will hold with respect to God, who is so infinitely above all the fond Passions of humane Nature, that it is a diminution to his Glory and Majesty to be thought like to Mankind; and therefore *his thoughts and ways are said to be as far above ours as the Heavens are above the Earth?*

*II. 55. 8, 9.*

To clear this, we are to consider, not only that our Blessed Saviour doth here lay the force and weight of the Parable upon the tenderness of a Father to his Son; but that he elsewhere argues from it in such a manner as to convince us that God hath far greater Pity and Compassion towards Mankind when they make due Applications to him, than Fathers can have towards their Children even when they ask for necessary Sustenance. *What Man is there of you, whom if his Son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or, if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your Children, How much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him?* There have been Philosophers so severe against the Passions of humane Nature, that they would not allow any Pity or Com-miseration towards others, whatever their Condition or Relation were, but only acting according to reason in supplying their Wants. But the Christian Religion doth far more reasonably allow such Passions in Mankind as dispose them to do good to others, by fixing such an impression on their Minds of others Misery as doth excite them to do what is fitting for their Ease and Support. And Compassion is not, as some imagine, such a mean and selfish Passion, as doth arise only from the Apprehension that we may suffer the same things our selves, which

*Matth. 7. 9, 10, 11*

we pity others for ; but it is a generous Sense of what others feel, joined with a Readiness to help them according to our Power. And in this Sense, our Saviour not only allows it in Fathers towards Children, but looks on it as necessary in humane Nature in order to the good and advantage of Mankind ; and therefore himself taking our Nature upon him is said *to be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities ; and to have compassion on the Ignorant, and on them that are out of the Way.*

But although this be allowable in humane Nature, how can such a thing as Compassion be attributed to the Divine Nature which is incapable of such impressions and motions, which we are subject to?

And yet the Scripture is very full and clear in attributing Pity and Compassion to Almighty God with respect to his Creatures. The Psalmist saith, *The Lord is full of Compassion and Mercy ; long-suffering, and of great Goodness.* St. James saith, *He is very pitifull, and of tender Mercy.* And in that wonderfull Appearance to Moses, when God himself declared his own Attributes, the greatest part consists of his Kindness and Mercy towards Mankind ; *The Lord God, mercifull and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth, keeping Mercy for thousands, forgiving Iniquity, Transgression and Sin.* And the Psalmist useth the very same similitude of a Father's Pity to his Children, *Like as a Father pitieth his Children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.* And when the Prophet speaks of God's thoughts and ways being so much above Man's, it is for this end to prove thereby that God may shew more pity to Mankind, than they find in their hearts to shew to one another. *Let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon ; For my thoughts are not your thoughts, &c.* But setting aside all this, the whole Scheme of the Gospel is drawn upon the Supposition of God's Pity and Compassion towards penitent Sinners ; which is the Reason our Saviour insists so much on the Proof of it in this whole Chapter. Wherein we not only read of *Joy in Heaven at the Repentance of a Sinner* ; but the Compassion of God Almighty towards a penitent Sinner is set forth with all the tenderness of an indulgent Father running into the Embraces of his Son, when he saw him at a distance coming towards him.

What now is the meaning of all this ? Are we we to conceive of God as one like to our selves, who either do not see faults in those we love ; or do not hate them, as we should do ; or are too apt to pass them over ; or are at first, it may be, apt to be angry upon a slight provocation, and then as easily made Friends upon as little Reason as we were made Angry ? But none of these things ought to enter into our Minds concerning God with respect to the Follies of Mankind.

And in this Case, if we will form in our Minds right and true Conceptions of the Divine Nature (as we ought to do) we must have a great Care lest we attribute any thing to God, which looks like Weakness and Imperfection, as the Motions and Changes of Passions do ; therefore to understand his Pity and Compassion, and Reconciliation to penitent Sinners, we must first know what his Anger and Displeasure against Sinners mean.

Some think that *Epicurus* did in earnest believe a God, but he was therefore forced to deny Providence, because he could not conceive that the Government of the World could be managed without such resentments as were inconsistent with the complete Happiness of the Divine Being ; and therefore he rather chose to make him careless and easie, than

than active and liable to Passion. The *Stoicks* attributed to God all that was good and kind and obliging; but would by no means endure that ever he should be said to be angry or displeas'd; which Doctrine did in effect overthrow Providence with respect to moral Actions, as much as the *Epicureans*. For if God did not regard the difference of Men's Actions, but was equally kind to them whether they did good or evil, such a Providence would have as little influence on Men's Lives as if there were none at all. We must then suppose, if we would uphold Religion and Morality in the World, not only that there is a Providence, but that God hath a different regard to Men according to the Good or Evil of their Actions. The Regard he hath to Men for being good and doing good is called his *Love*, his *Kindness*, his *Good-will*, his *Grace* and *Favour*; that which he hath to things that are Evil is called his Hatred; that which he hath to Persons for doing Evil is his *Anger*, *Wrath*, *Displeasure*, *Indignation*; according to the different Nature and Circumstances of their evil Actions.

But in order to the preventing any false or mean Apprehensions of the Divine Nature, when the Passions of Mankind are attributed to it, we must consider these two things;

(1.) That we must by no means attribute to God any thing that is unreasonable in our selves; such are all irregular motions, which we call violent Passions, arising from Surprise, Mistake, Inadvertency, Weakness, or corrupt Inclination. But setting all these aside, the original Passions of Mankind, which are agreeable to Reason, are no other than what arise from an Inclination to what we judge to be good, and an Aversion from what we apprehend to be evil; which holds as to the Divine Nature.

(2.) That there is an observable Difference in the very Nature of some Passions, which imply a Repugnancy in themselves to the Divine Perfections, which others do not. For Love and Kindness, and joy, and inward Satisfaction have nothing in them supposing their Object good, but what agrees with the Divine Nature; but the Passions contrary to these, as Envy, Ill-will and Revenge are not only repugnant as Passions, but in their own Nature; for God cannot envy the Good of his Creatures, nor bear ill-will to them as such, nor take pleasure in their Torments. And of this Nature *Anger* properly taken is, as it doth imply a present Disorder and Disturbance within, from the Apprehension of some Injury done or intended, with a Desire of Revenge on those who do it; all which is inconsistent with the necessary Perfections of God; for they argue Meanness, Imperfection and Mutability.

We must therefore fix on such a Notion of Anger as becomes the Almighty Wisdom and Goodness; and that lies in,

(1.) A Displeasure against the Sinner on the account of his Sins; for God cannot have any Complacency in those who displease him as all Sinners do, whether they design it or not.

(2.) A Will to punish Sinners according to their Demerits; which being according to the Rules of Wisdom and Righteous Government, cannot be said to argue an indecent Passion.

(3.) The actual Execution of his Justice upon great Provocations. And so God is said to be angry when he punishes; especially when he doth it suddenly and severely; as Men in their Passion are wont to do. But whatever God doth in this kind, he doth it with the Wisdom and Temper of a Judge, and not with the Fury or Passion of an angry Being.

And

And there is nothing in all this unbecoming the Divine Nature, but very agreeable thereto. And this is all which in strictness of Reason is understood by God's being *angry* with Mankind. For we must never imagine that God acts according to sudden Heats and Passions; but whatever he doth is according to the Counsels of infinite Wisdom and Goodness.

I do not deny that the Scripture doth represent *Anger* in God as if it were a Passion raised upon great Provocation, and capable of being laid by Submission and true Repentance. Thence we read, of *God's Wrath waxing hot, of his Anger kindling against his People, and his turning away from his fierce Anger*, and many such Expressions; but so we read of the *Fire of his Indignation, the Sword of his Wrath, the Stretching forth of his Hand*; which all grant are not to be literally understood. If then in these Expressions, the Perfections of the Divine Nature are to be our Rule, according to which we must interpret them, because the literal sense implies an incongruity to the Divine Perfections which are all wholly Spiritual; then from the same Reason we must remove all Perturbations from it which are as inconsistent with the absolute Perfection of it, as *Eyes and Ears and Hands and Feet* are, although they are all mention'd in Scripture.

From whence we justly infer, that there is a wonderfull Condescension to the ordinary Capacities and common Apprehensions of Mankind in the Language of Scripture, concerning the Divine Nature, which makes deeper impressions on meaner understandings, and those who are of finer thoughts will see cause to attribute only such a Sense of things relating to God, as is consistent with his Infinite and Divine Perfections.

But what now shall we say to this Tenderneſs and Compassion of God towards penitent Sinners? Can he be moved by our Trouble and Sorrow and Acts of Contrition for our Sins? If we be righteous what doth it profit the Almighty? And if we be evil, how can it hurt him? And if when we have sinned, we repent, we do no more than is fitting for us; but why should we imagine the Great and Wise God should have Compassion upon us, when we become sensible of our own Folly? For when we sin against God, wilfully, deliberately, knowingly, habitually, we do what lies in us to provoke him to Wrath and Indignation against us; we reject his wise Government, we slight his righteous Laws, we prefer the pleasing our corrupt Inclinations and sensual Lusts before our heavenly Father. And what can be more provoking to him than to be so despised by one who had his Being and all the Comforts of Life from him?

Suppose now such a disobedient, rebellious Son, as here in the Parable, be made sensible of his Folly, is his Father bound to receive him? Was it not his own choice to go from him? If he hath suffered by his Folly, he may thank himself for it; and if his Father lets him alone in it, he hath no cause to complain.

But such was the Tenderneſs of the Father towards his repenting Son, that he shewd the greatest Compassion imaginable; for he did not stay at home expecting his Son's solemn Submission before his Family, but *he ran towards him, and fell upon his Neck, and kissed him.*

What Conceptions now ought we to have of God's Compassion towards penitent Sinners answerable to all this? This I shall endeavour to clear in these Particulars.

(1.) That

(1.) That God's hatred is not primarily against Persons who are his Creatures ; but against that which is evil, which is none of his making ; and against Persons only so far as they are corrupted with Evil. *Thou lovest Righteousness, and hatest Wickedness,* saith the Psalmist. God hates nothing for its own sake, but Sin ; and for the sake of that *he hates all Workers of Iniquity.* Psal. 45. 7. Psal. 5. 5.

(2.) There may be Good-will towards the Person of a Sinner at the same time when God discovers the hatred of his Sins. I do not say, God takes any pleasure in him while he goes on in Sin, for that is against the Eternal Rules of Righteousness in God ; but that he may have so much Good-will towards him, as to design to reduce him from his evil Ways. And this every Father finds in himself towards a disobedient Son, while he hates his evil Courses ; yet he would make use of the best methods to bring him to himself, and to his Duty. And upon this is grounded that *Love and Kindness of God towards Mankind,* Tit. 2. 4. in sending his Son to be our Saviour, and all the Promises and Invitations which are made to Sinners in the Doctrine of the Gospel.

(3.) It is very agreeable to Infinite Wisdom and Goodness for God to shew himself full of Pity and Compassion towards penitent Sinners, *i. e.* so as to forgive them their former Sins, and to receive them into his Favour. For Pity and Compassion in God is to be judged, not according to the inward Motions we find in our selves, but according to these two things.

(1.) A readiness to do good to his Creatures according to their Necessities. Which being in general, is his *Bounty and Goodness* ; but considered with respect to the Persons of Sinners, it is his *Clemency*, or readiness to forgive ; and with respect to the *Punishment* they deserve by their Sins, it is his *Mercy and Pity* : Which in us is *Ægritudo ex Misericordia alterius*, and therefore called *Misericordia*, because the Heart is touched with the Sense of another's Misery ; but we are not so to apprehend it in God ; but that such is the Goodness of God towards repenting Sinners, that he is as willing to shew Mercy as they are to repent.

(2.) God's Pity and Compassion lies in the proper Effects of it ; which here in the Case of the Prodigal were, passing by his former Extravagances, and receiving him into as much Favour as if he had not gone astray. *This my Son was dead, and is alive again ; was lost, and is found.* v. 24. 30. Those who think, they stand not in need of so much pardoning Mercy as others do, are apt to repine at the Favour shewed to great Sinners when they repent ; and therefore the Elder Brother could not bear the expressing so much kindness towards such a disobedient Son, though now a Penitent. But that there is nothing disagreeing to Infinite Wisdom and Goodness in such Compassion towards penitent Sinners, will more fully appear, if we consider,

(1.) That God is not bound to deal with Sinners according to the utmost Rigour and Severity of his Justice. Because he is under no fatal Necessity ; no superiour Law ; and therefore may act freely in the forgiving Offenders as seems best to his Infinite Wisdom. The whole Race of Mankind is a perpetual Evidence that God doth not act according to the strictness of his Justice, for *if he had dealt with them after their Sins, or rewarded them according to their Iniquities ; their Spirits would have failed before him, and the Souls which he had made ; they had been long since destroyed from the Face of the Earth, and not suffered to continue in their Provocations.* But God hath not only forborn Sinners long when

he might justly have punished them; but he gives them many real Blessings and Comforts of Life, freely and bountifully. Now if God deal so mercifully with Sinners while they continue such, is there not greater Reason to suppose he will be far more so, when they cease to be such?

(2.) A penitent Sinner doth what in him lies to vindicate God's Honour. I do not say, he can make satisfaction to Divine Justice; for that is impossible for him to do; and God hath provided for that by his own Son, whom he hath made a *Propitiation for the Sins of the World*. But a true Penitent takes all the Shame and Dishonour to himself; he clears the Justice of God's Government, and the Equity of his Laws, and owns himself guilty of unspeakable Folly in his Disobedience. "O how justly, saith he, might God have taken me away in the midst of my Sins, when my Conscience checked me for my Sins, and yet I had no heart to repent of them! When I could not but see my danger, and yet was unwilling to come out of it. I can never be sufficiently thankfull for so great a Mercy as his bringing me to my self hath been; I had gone on in the same secure, stupid, senseless Condition, that others lie in, if he had not thoroughly awaken'd me, and roused me out of my impenitent State. How dreadfull had my Condition for ever been, if my first awakening had been in the Flames of Hell? Nothing but infinite Goodness and Patience would have waited so long for the Repentance of such an Offender as I have been. I have sinned so often, that I am ashamed to think of the Number of my Transgressions; so deeply, that I am confounded at the thoughts of them; so foolishly, that I am unworthy to be called thy Son, who have acted so unlike thy Children (so the prodigal Son here speaks to his Father.) And if thou wouldst admit me but to the meanest Condition of thy Servants, I shall ever esteem it as the greatest Privilege of my Life, and endeavour to serve Thee for the future though in the lowest Capacity. Thus the repenting Prodigal goes on, *v. 19*. And in a suitable manner every true Penitent behaves himself towards God with great Humility, and a deep Sense of his own Unworthiness; and is thereby rendred more capable of Divine Favour. *For God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.* And therefore it is very agreeable to infinite Wisdom and Goodness to shew pity towards a truly humble and penitent Sinner; *For a broken and contrite heart he will not despise.*

Jam 4 6.

Ps. 51. 17.

Rom 3. 2.

Eccl. 7. 20.

(3.) If God were not so full of Compassion to penitent Sinners, there would have been no encouragement for Sinners to repent; but they must have sunk into everlasting Despair. For if God should forgive none that Sin, then all Mankind must be condemned to Eternal Misery; for *all have sinned*; and *there is not a just Man upon Earth who sinneth not*; and so the best and worst, and all sorts of Sinners must here suffer together; which would have taken away all the Notion of any such thing as Mercy and Clemency in God towards Mankind. But if we set bounds to it as to some particular kinds and degrees of sinning; we limit that which is infinite; we determine what we know not, *viz.* how far God's Mercy doth extend; we destroy the Power of Divine Grace in changing and reforming the worst of Men. But the Scripture hath recorded some remarkable Instances of great Sinners, who have been great Penitents, and upon that have been pardon'd (such as *Manasse*, and some others) that no penitent Sinner might be discouraged in the

Work



Work of Repentance. For a true Penitent searching to the bottom, and setting all his Sins before him, with their several Aggravations, can be kept from Despair by nothing less than the Infinite Mercy of God to those who truly repent.

(4.) Because there is nothing so provoking in Sin, as obstinate Impenitency, and Continuance in it.

It is true, God hates all Sin for its own sake; but not all equally; some Sins being of a higher Nature than others are; being against plainer Light, stronger Convictions, more easie Commands, stricter Obligations than others are; but yet it is the Temper of a Sinner's Mind, which is most provoking, when Sins are committed, not through Infirmity, or sudden surprize, or a violent Temptation; but habitually, knowingly, wilfully; especially when they are done in Contempt of God and his Laws, and with an obstinate Resolution to continue in the Practice of them. This is so provoking to God, that the chief Reason of the severe Punishments of Sinners in another World is taken from thence; because God hates obstinate and impenitent Sinners. *And thus he will by no means acquit the Guilty.* *There is a Sin unto death,* saith *St. John,* *and there is a sin not unto death.* There is a Sin unto death, which *Christ* hath said he will never pardon; and that is *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*; a Sin which none who do truly own Christianity, are capable of committing. Exod. 34. 7. John 5. 16, 17. Matth. 12. 32.

But is there then no *Sin unto death* to them? Yes, it is possible for Men who have clear Convictions in their minds of the Truth of the Gospel, to act so plainly, and wilfully, and directly against it, as either to provoke God to take them away by an extraordinary Judgment, and so it is properly a *Sin unto death*; or to withdraw his Grace from them; and leave them to the hardness of their own Hearts, and so it becomes a Sin unto a Spiritual death. But besides these Cases; every wilful Sinner who adds Impenitency to his Sin, commits *the Sin unto death*; because there is no other Condition of Pardon allow'd by the Gospel without true Repentance.

How infinite is the Goodness of God that excludes no Sinners from the hopes of Pardon who have a heart to repent sincerely of their Sins! And how just is God in the final Punishment of those Sinners, who still go on in their Sins, and refuse to repent; after all the Invitations and Encouragements which are given them to that End! Can we in Reason suppose that God should stoop lower towards Sinners, than to offer them pardon of former Sins, if they do repent; and to tell them they must expect no Mercy in another World if they do not repent?

But suppose we are come thus far, that we are convinced we must repent, what Course and Method must we take in order to it? Of this briefly, and so to conclude.

*Secondly,* I know no better than to follow the Example of the prodigal Son here: And in the first place to form a present, sincere, fixed and peremptory Resolution of doing it; *I will arise and go to my Father,* &c. If we suffer Convictions to cool upon our Minds, the force and spirit of them will soon be gone. It hath been of late observed by the strictest Enquirers into Nature, that the beginnings of Life are very small, and hardly discernible. It is but as a spark that appears, and may easily be extinguished; but if it be encouraged by a continual heat, a wonderful Alteration soon follows, and the distinct parts begin to be

formed; the first which is discerned is the Eye, but the Fountain of Life is in the Heart; and when the Course of the Blood is there settled, the other parts come to their due formation with greater quickness. This may be a Representation of the first Beginnings of Spiritual Life, that which answers to the Eye is the Conviction of the Mind, where the inward Change first appears; that which answers to the Heart is *Resolution*, and when that is fixed, a mighty Reformation will soon follow. But Spiritual Life as well as Natural is in its first Beginnings a very nice and tender thing, it may be easily stopt, and very hardly recovered: It is therefore of very great Concernment to keep up the Warmth of our first Resolutions, and to improve them into a present Practice agreeable thereto; as the prodigal Son here did, who when he had resolved upon it, *did accordingly arise and go to his Father*, v. 20.

I do not think there are many Persons in the World who have Convictions upon their Minds of the Evil of their Ways; but do resolve at one time or other before they die to repent of their Sins, and to make their Peace with God. But alas! these are *Ova subventanea*, they make a fair appearance, but there is no principal of Life in them; or as St. Jude expresses it, *they are Clouds without Water*; of no Consistency, but carried about with winds; hurried to and fro with the force and power of Temptations; and then their Resolutions are like the Vapours St. James speaks of, *which appear for a little time, and then vanish away*. Trees they are without fruit, as St. Jude goes on, *Δένδρα ἔσθιοι καὶ ἄκατοι*; not that make no shew or appearance of Fruit; but it hath no such firmness and substance in it as to endure the nipping Frosts, and so it drops off, and withers away. Just such are the Effects of faint and imperfect Resolutions, they never hold out long, and only aggravate the Sins committed after them. For every such Sin is a plain Sin against Conscience; or else they would never have made any Resolution against it. And those who continue to sin after Resolutions against their Sins, not only lose all the Peace and Comfort of their Minds, but make it much harder for them, either to make or trust their Resolutions again, and consequently to be satisfied of the Sincerity of their Repentance.

If we would then lay a sure Foundation for the Satisfaction of our Minds in a matter of such unconceivable Moment as the Truth of our Repentance is, let us call our selves to an Account as to this matter of the firm Purpose and Resolution of our Minds. Have we strictly examin'd our selves as to our particular Sins? For there is no Age, no Imployment, no Condition of Life but hath its Temptations belonging to it; which require not only our Care and Consideration, but Resolution to keep us from them. But suppose we have been overcome by *the Sin which doth so easily beset us*; the Work is harder to recover the Ground we have lost, than at first to maintain it; but if we have sinned, we must repent; and the sooner the better; but it is not to be done without awakening the drowsie and benumbed Faculties of our Minds, and exercising the secret and hidden Powers therein. Not as though this were to be done without the Grace of God preventing and assisting us; but because *God worketh in us to will and to do of his good Pleasure*, we ought to *work out our own Salvation with fear and trembling*;

Let us then trifle no longer in a Work we can never do too well, nor too soon; nor go about it with too much Resolution. It is the want of this, which ruins such a Number of those who would fain go to Heaven, but have not Courage and Resolution enough to own their Repentance,

Repentance, and to break off from their former Sins: They are half Penitents; they are inwardly troubled for them, and wish themselves able to withstand the next Temptation; but when it comes, they yield and suffer themselves to be drawn away, *as a Bird hasteth to the Snare, and knoweth not that it is for his Life.* Prov. 7.23. Now in such Cases, Resolution is not only a convenient and proper thing; but a very wise thing. For, when once a Resolution is found to be serious, and in good earnest, the former Companions in wickedness will leave off to solicit; and if once a Penitent Sinner can endure to be despised, and exposed for a time by evil Men for owning his Repentance, he will find the other parts of his Change grow more easie to him; and the Devil's Instruments in tempting will be like himself; *i.e.* they will give over tempting when they see no hopes to prevail. And let no Men ever complain that they want Power to break off their former Sins, till they have tried what the strength of a vigorous Resolution will do. But because we have always reason to suspect our selves, let us make our devout Applications to Almighty God to give us the Assistance of his Grace through the only Mediation of his Son *Jesus Christ.* *To whom, &c.*

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Scripture and Tradition

COMPARED;

IN A

SERMON

Preached at

Guild-Hall-Chapel,

*November 27. 1687.*

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T H E

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# P R E F A C E.

**I** Intend, God willing, to publish in a little time, a full Answer to J. S. his Catholick Letters, so far as I am concerned in them. In the mean while, I thought it not unfit to Print this Sermon I lately Preached, that I might give a General View of Scripture and Tradition, as to the Way of conveying Matters of Faith, before I come to the particular Debate with J. S. Wherein I do not doubt, but I shall be able to shew that we have very good Grounds for the Certainty of our Faith, and that they have none either as to Faith or Tradition, as to the main Points in Controversie between us.

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SER-

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# SERMON XXIV.

## Scripture and Tradition

### COMPARED;

IN A

# SERMON

Preached at

## Guild-Hall-Chapel,

November 27. 1687.

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COLOSS. II. 6.

*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.*

**T**HERE are two things observable in the manner of St. Paul's expressing himself to the *Colossians* in this *Epistle*.

I. That he had a very good opinion of them at present, as appears by the foregoing Verse. *For though I be absent in the Flesh, yet am I with you in the Spirit, joying, and beholding your Order, and the stedfastness of your Faith in Christ.*

What could be said more to the Advantage and Honour of a Christian Church? For *Order* is the Strength and Beauty of any Society, uniting the several Parts to each other, and thereby preserving and adorning the whole Body. And the more there is of this in any Christian Church, the more it resembles the Body of Christ, and the greater Honour it brings to the Christian Profession. Especially, when it is joyed with a *stedfastness of Faith in Christ*, i. e. with a firm and well settled Resolution to adhere to that Faith which Christ himself delivered. For the true Faith of Christ is not only the Mark which distinguishes, but the Soul which enlivens the Body of the Church, and by

its Vigour and Influence makes the several Parts of it become the living Members of Christ's Body.

But if all this were seen by St. Paul in the Church of the *Colossians*, what need he to write so warmly and earnestly as he doth to them? Must we think, as some do, that he uses these Expressions as gentle *Methods of Insinuation*, and commends them for that, which he would persuade them to? But this doth not seem agreeable to the Apostles *2 Cor. 1. 12.* *simplicity and godly sincerity*, which he elsewhere sets such a value upon. But it is far more probable that hitherto they had been very *orderly and stedfast*: But *Epaphras* going to St. Paul had informed him throughly of their condition, *viz.* That they were like a Garrison closely besieged on all sides; and altho' hitherto they had held out with great Courage, yet he did not know what earnest Sollicitations, and fair Promises, and tempting Motives might do with them, and therefore the Apostle writes this Epistle to encourage them in their *stedfastness*, and to warn them against Temptations. Which he doth in such a manner, as shews,

2. That he had a more than ordinary Apprehension of the danger they were in. *And this I say, saith he, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words, v. 4. And beware lest any man spoil you with Philosophy and vain deceit, after the Traditions of men, after the Rudiments of the World, and not after Christ, v. 8. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of Angels, &c. v. 18.* All which expressions do imply, that he had just reason to fear and to give them caution in time, that while they did yet *think that they stood, they should take heed lest they fell.*

And this is that which the Apostle aims at in the words of the Text; *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.*

*Receiving Christ Jesus the Lord*, doth not here relate to his Person, but to his Authority, and to his Doctrine; so the Apostle himself explains it in the next Verse, *Rooted and built up in him, and established in the Faith, as ye have been taught.*

*Walking in him* is an Eastern-way of speaking and supposes both an adhering to that Faith they had then received, and living according to it, looking on Christ and his Doctrine, as their *only way* to Heaven.

*And as ye had received him, so walk ye in him*, implies that the manner of their receiving Christ and his Doctrine at first was different from that which the false Apostles endeavoured to bring in among them, and that they were bound to keep close to that pure and primitive Doctrine which they at first received.

From hence we may consider a double Obligation lying upon them.

1. *To keep stedfast to that Faith which they first received*, without being seduced from it by the Arts of Deceivers, who were then busie among them.

2. *To live according to it*, by making that Faith the Principle of a Christian Life; and so *walking in him, as they have received him.*

1. As to the former, the Reasonableness of it cannot but appear from the supposition here made, *viz. that they had received Christ Jesus the Lord.*

For thereby they declared, that *they received him as the Christ, i. e. as him who was anointed of the Father to teach and instruct his Church*; and therefore they were bound to adhere to his Doctrine; there being no other, whom *the Father hath sealed* and appointed to declare his Will; and *in him were hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.*

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They received him as *Christ Jesus*, that is, they hoped for *Redemption* Col. 1. 14. thro' his Blood, even the forgiveness of sins. And if their hopes of Heaven depended upon his Mediation, they had the greatest Reason to adhere only to him.

They received him as *Christ Jesus the Lord*, and therefore they ought to submit to his Authority, to obey his Commands, and to observe his Institutions, and in all Circumstances of Life to keep stedfast to the Doctrines which he delivered.

But here arises the great Difficulty, how they should know by any certain Rule, what was the true and genuine Doctrines of Christ, which himself delivered? For,

1. The false Teachers among them pretended to deliver the true Doctrines of Christ as well as the Apostles.

2. That which they at first received was no certain Rule. For the false Teachers might have been before them. And first Possession gives no Title in Religion.

3. The *Apostle* doth not put the whole Trial meerly upon their Judgments, or Memories, or Capacities; viz. What they thought, or remembered, was at first taught them for the Doctrines of Christ.

For, it was very possible for them to have mistaken, or to have misremembered, what was at first delivered.

Nothing can be more weak than to imagine that the Judgments of People in Matters of Faith, must be formed according to the skill and excellency of their Teachers. For the hearers of Christ himself; although he spake as never Man spake, yet did very often mistake his meaning. And at one time so remarkably, that although he took care to rectify their misapprehension, yet it is said, *From that time many of his Disciples* John 6. 66. went back and walked no more with him. So that the highest Infallibility in the Teachers, doth not prevent the Possibility, or the danger of mistaking in the Hearers. And whatsoever any vainly pretend, nothing can do it, but *Transfusing* the Spirit of Infallibility into all.

If we look over the *Apostolical Churches* while they were under the Care and Conduct of an *infallible Spirit*; yet this did not prevent their running into great Errors and Mistakes, as appears by the Account we have of them, given by that Spirit which cannot deceive in the *Apostolical Writings*.

In the Church of *Rome* it self, even at that, when *its Faith was spoken* Rom. 1. 8. of throughout the World, yet there were dissensions and differences there, and such as were *contrary to the Doctrines* which was delivered. And *St. Paul* bids them to mark such which caused them; he doth not say, it was impossible for them to introduce any thing *contrary to the Doctrines* which they had learned by *Tradition* from the Apostles; but he not only supposes it very possible, but he bids them have a particular Eye to them, lest they should be deceived by them. 16, 17.

The Church of *Corinth* was planted by Paul, and watered by *Apollos*; and there were Disciples of *Cephas* and of *Christ himself*. And yet in the midst of so many infallible Teachers, they had like to have lost all their Faith; as one of them tells them. *How say some among you there* 1 Cor. 15. is no Resurrection of the dead? *And if Christ be not risen, then is our Preaching* 12, 14. vain, and your Faith is also vain. Could not they remember to day what was taught them yesterday, and so what the Apostles at first preached to them?

The Churches of *Galatia* had such an opinion of *St. Paul*, upon his first preaching the Gospel among them, *that they received him as an Angel of God, even as Christ Jesus*; yet presently after he saith, *am I therefore become your Enemy because I tell you the Truth?* What! *Of an Angel of God, or of one received as Christ Jesus, to become their Enemy*, and that upon the most unjustifiable Account, *because he told them the Truth!* But, where Truth can make Enemies, Errours may easily gain Friends. And so we find it was in the Apostolical Churches, even under the Conduct and Teaching of the Apostles.

The *Colossians* were not yet so far gone; but they were in such danger, that the Apostle writes this Epistle with great Concernment for them. He tells them, *v. 1. he had a sharp Conflict in his own mind about them. They had not yet seen his Face in the Flesh*, being converted by some sent by him, of whom *Epaphras* is most taken notice of; but he was present with them in Spirit, *v. 5. i. e.* He was deeply affected with their Condition; for he understood the Designs and Artifices of the Seducers among them. He knew what fair and plausible Pretences they had, *viz.* that they went about not to undermine Christianity, but to advance it, by taking in some Jewish Customs, and some Gentile Observances, and Modes of Worship which might easily be accommodated to the Christian Doctrine; and so a great deal of the Animosities both of the Jews and Heathens would be removed; and Christianity would thereby gain more Friends, and meet with fewer Enemies.

The Apostle finding how necessary it was at this time, if possible, to keep them *stedfast in the Faith*,

1. He assures them, that the Christian Doctrine was of it self so sufficient for the good of Mankind, that it needed no Additions, either from the Law of *Moses*, or the Philosophy of the Gentiles, which might introduce several things, with a specious Appearance of *Wisdom, Humility and Mortification*; but they ought to be assured, that from Christ they had all that was necessary, or useful for Salvation; *For in him are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.*

2. That this Doctrine was at first truly delivered to them, and they ought to be stedfast in it; which is the design of the Text.

But they might object that *Epaphras* was no Apostle of Christ himself; and if he were yet there were many Apostles, and the false Apostles pretended to be true ones; and although *St. Paul* interposed his Authority, yet he was but one, and the *Judaizers* would not yield to it, but were ready to suggest, that the other Apostles were more favourable to the Jewish Customs than he; and therefore it was necessary some more general and common Rule be found out, whereby to distinguish the Original and Genuine Doctrine of Christ from that of Pretenders and Seducers.

The clearing of this is in it self a matter of great Consequence; and not only was to those of that Age, but is so in every Age of the Christian Church, where the same Question may be put: What was the true Primitive Doctrine of Christ; and by what means may we come to it? which concerns us at this day as well as them.

And the Answer lay in two particulars, which I shall endeavour to clear.

1. That which the Apostles did in common deliver to the Churches planted by them, was the Genuine Doctrine of Christ.

2. That which they have left in their Writings, after it came to be contested which was the true Doctrine of Christ.

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1. That which the Apostles did in common deliver to the Churches planted by them. For, we have all the reason in the World to believe, that the Apostles delivered one and the same Faith to all the Churches; having the same infallible Spirit to direct them. There was no need for them *to meet together before their dispersion, and to agree upon some common Article of Faith*, as *Ruffinus* imagins, *lest they should differ from each other*; Ruffin. in Symbol. Joh. 16. 13. For how could they differ, who had the same *Spirit of Truth to lead them into all Truth*? And we find nothing like a Combination among the Apostles, as to Matters of Doctrine: And if there had been, it would have rendred the Faith they delivered more suspicious, in that they durst not trust particular persons with delivery of it, without an antecedent Confederacy among themselves, which would have looked like a mistrust of that *Promise* of the *Spirits* being fulfilled, upon all of them. And we find, when the Gospels were to be written, there was no such meeting together, to settle the several Parts of it; and yet this was of as much consequence to the Church of God; but *St. Matthew* writes his Gospel in *Judea*, at the time saith *Irenæus*, *that Peter and Paul* Iren. l. 3 c. 1. *preached and founded a Church in Rome*, *St. Mark* either at *Rome* or in *Egypt*, *not till after their decease*, saith the same very Ancient Father, *St. Luke* in *Greece*, after *St. Paul* planted Churches in *Rome*, and *St. John* Euseb. l. 5. c. 18. in *Asia*, after all the rest. But there was the same Divine Spirit, which assisted them all, and therefore there was such a concurrence as shewed their veracity, but such a variety as shewed there was no Combination.

But it is observable, that none of the Gospels were written till the Doctrine of Christ had been preached by the Apostles in many Places, and many Churches were formed and established by them. And there were two great Advantages thereby.

1. The Unity of the Faith delivered by the Apostles was the more seen; because then without the help of a written Rule, they so unanimously agreed in the Doctrines they delivered. Not, as though it were less possible to mistake without it; but on the contrary, there being a much greater liableness to mistake, so Universal a consent, was the stronger Argument of a Divine Assistance. If there had been any difference in the Doctrines preached by the Apostles, there were so many Enemies both of Jews and Infidels, and false Apostles, who would presently have reproached the Christian Churches with it. But no disagreement is ever so much as mention'd, as to what the Apostles themselves taught; *They had one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism*, Eph. 4. 4, 5. 6. *one God and Father of all*. Where-ever the Apostles went, whether into *Scythia*, *Parthia*, *Mesopotamia*, or any Provinces of the *Roman Empire*, all who were converted by them were baptized into the same Faith, which *St. Jude* calls *the Faith once delivered to the Saints*. But *once delivered* though by many Persons, and in very distant places; and so *once delivered*, as the same Faith once delivered is to continue to the World's end. For nothing can be made the Faith of Christ, which was not always so; for that were to lay a *new foundation*, and to make another Covenant than what Christ hath sealed with his Blood. *But he is the* Heb. 13. 8. *same yesterday, to day, and for ever*. The Terms of Salvation can never be altered, unless there be a new Saviour, and new Apostles, and new Teachers. But if we go to Heaven by Christ, we must go that way that himself hath directed. For Men and Angels joining their Powers together cannot save one Soul; Christ alone *being the Way, the Truth and* John 14. 6. *the Life*; and none can come to the Father but by him. This the Apostles  
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very well knew, and were therefore carefull to deliver nothing to the Church but what they received from Christ, as *St. Paul* saith of himself, *For I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you.* Not by way of Tradition from Men, but by immediate Divine Revelation; for as he saith, *he was not an Apostle of Men, or by Men, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father;* and not long after he saith, *he neither received the Gospel of Man, neither was he taught it but by Revelation of Jesus Christ.*

There was none of all the first Preachers of the Gospel so liable to the Suspicion of setting up for himself, and varying from the rest as *St. Paul* was. For he was none of the Original Number of Apostles, and he was a known Persecutor of the Disciples of Christ, and sudden Converts are always suspected; and *Ananias* had a Vision to satisfy him, and yet he could not tell what to think at first concerning him; and the Disciples when they first heard him were amazed; after this, he took a course by himself, and did not go up to *Jerusalem* to the College of Apostles there resident, but went into *Arabia*; so that, if any one might be thought to set up another Doctrine, it was he; but he was so far from it, that he established and confirmed the Truth of what they delivered, and was very successful in his Apostleship in all Places. And when there had been some Whispers concerning him, as though he proceeded not in the same way with the rest, he went up to *Jerusalem*, and there upon full examination, *James, and Cephas, and John, who were the leading Apostles, gave him the Right-hand of Fellowship;* in token of their full consent in the same Faith.

2. The Truth of the Gospel was the more plainly discovered.

All this while, the Apostles only preached and delivered their Doctrine to the several Churches by verbal Instructions; but after these had been received in the hearts of such Multitudes, that there could be no suspicion that a false Representation of Christ's Doctrine or Actions could be received by those Churches, then the wise Providence of God took care for Posterity, and employ'd several Persons in distant Places and Times to write the History of our Saviour. And there was this advantage to the Church that the Gospels were written no sooner. For all the Churches planted by Apostles, were then made Judges whether the Gospels written were agreeable to the Doctrine which the Apostles had taught; and if not, there would have been just reason to have question'd either the Truth of what had been taught them, or what was delivered in the Gospels.

But when they found the main to be fully consonant to what they had been taught, the Testimony of every one of these Churches did shew the concurrence of all the Apostles, as to the Doctrine contained in the several Gospels.

And that which adds to the strength of this Proof is, that when the true Gospels were written, there were several false and counterfeit Gospels dispersed abroad under the Names of the Apostles themselves. As of *St. Peter, St. Thomas, St. Matthias,* and others; as *Eusebius* informs us, and as we have the genuine *Acts of the Apostles,* so there were the pretended *Acts of Paul, of Andrew and John,* and the other Apostles. How came these to be rejected, and the other to be carefully received? Here lies the true Advantage of *Original Tradition* before the *written Gospels,* that by it the several Churches were enabled to pass a true Judgment concerning them when they came to be dispersed among them.

them. For they could presently tell, whether what they read were agreeable to what they had heard and received from the *Apostles*. As suppose the Gospel of St. *Matthew* being published in *Judea*, were carried into *Mesopotamia* or *Persia*, where many Christian Churches were very early planted; these being thoroughly instructed by the *Apostles* in all things relating to the Life, Death, Resurrection and Doctrine of Christ, could presently judge whether St. *Matthew's* Gospel agreed with what they had heard or not, and the like holds as to all the Churches in the *Roman* Empire. So that the consent of the Churches so soon, while the Memory of the *Apostles* Doctrine was so fresh in their minds, is in effect the consent of *all the Apostles* who taught them.

And this is very different from the case of particular Persons in some Churches, who might mistake or forget what was taught; for this is a concurrent Testimony of all the Apostolical Churches, who could not agree to approve an Error in the Gospels contrary to the Faith delivered to them. And that while some of the *Apostles* were still living. For the other Gospels were received and approved, before St. *John* wrote his.

The case had been far otherwise, if no *Gospels* had been written in that Age; for then it might have been suspected, that either the Impressions of the first Teachers were worn out, or they had been by degrees alter'd from their first Apprehensions by the cunning craftiness of of those who lay in wait to deceive them.

After the decease of the *Apostles*, the common Tradition of the *Apostolical Churches* was usefull in these cases;

1. To convey down the Authentick Writings of the *Apostles* or Evangelists, which were delivered to any of them.

2. To bear Testimony against any pretended Writings, which were not first received by the *Apostolical Churches* to which they were said to be written. For there can be no Negative Testimony of more force than that; it being improbable to the utmost degree that such a Church should not know, or not make known any true *Apostolical Writings*.

3. To overthrow any pretence to a secret Tradition from the *Apostles* different from what was seen in the *Apostolical Writings*. And to this purpose *Irenæus* and *Tertullian* make very good use of the Tradition of the *Apostolical Churches* against the pretenders to such a Tradition, which those Churches were not acquainted with.

*Iren. l. 3. c. 3, 4. Tertul. de Præscrip. Her.*

But they agree that the *Apostles* committed the same Doctrine to writing which they preached, and that it might be a Foundation and Pillar of Faith; that this Doctrine was contained in the four *Gospels*; and that the *Apostolical Churches* did receive them from those who first wrote them, and that within the compass of the *Apostolical* Age.

It was therefore most agreeable to the infinite Wisdom of God in providing for a constant Establishment of the Faith of his Church in all Ages, neither to permit the *Gospels* to be written till the Churches were planted, nor to be put off to another Generation. For, then it would have been plausibly objected; "if these things are true, why were they not recorded, when there were Persons living who were best able to have either proved, or confuted them? Then we might have been satisfied one way or other; but now the *Jews* are dead, and the *Apostles* are dead; and although there are many left who believe their Doctrine, yet this can never reach to the Testimony of those who saw and heard the things themselves, or whose Doctrine

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“ was attested by those who did so. And this is now the mighty Advantage of the Church ever since that the things concerning Christ were written by such Persons. With what another kind of Authority do those words command our Assent, *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life; For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that Eternal Life; which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us, that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you;* then if all the Testimony concerning Christ were to be resolved into those who heard some say, that others told them, they had it from such, who saw those who conversed with them who saw Christ in the Flesh? At such a distance the Authority of a Testimony is extremely less'n'd; which is not like a River which grows greater by running; but like a mineral Water which loses its strength by being carried too far. We find in the time of *Papias* who lived but in the second Century, the Authority of bare Tradition was mightily sunk; For, *Eusebius* saith, *he conversed with the Disciples of our Lord and his Apostles, he saith of himself, that he went up and down to them to get what he could from them, having a greater esteem of what he could learn from them than of what was written.* And what Advantage did this bring to the Church? *It brought some idle opinions into reputation, saith Eusebius; for afterwards they thought it enough to fix them upon Papias. But how was it possible for him to mistake? Eusebius saith, that being a Man of mean capacity, he might easily misunderstand the meaning of what was spoken. But if Tradition might fail after such a manner so near the Apostle's times; then we must be assured of the Capacity as well as Integrity of those of every Age through whom a Tradition passed, or else they might deceive, or be deceived about it.*

But God was pleased to provide better for the security of our Faith, by causing the Gospels to be written either by the Apostles themselves, as *St. Matthew* and *St. John*, or by the Disciples of the chief Apostles, while the others were surviving, as *St. Mark* and *St. Luke*; and the latter gives this account of his undertaking to write it, *viz. That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.* His instruction was by an Oral Tradition; but that it seems wanted something to strengthen and confirm it; and that was by *St. Luke's* writing his Gospel. How could they add any assurance to him, if all the ground of his certainty were to be taken from Tradition? *St. Luke* thought it necessary then; that those things which concerned the Life and Doctrine of Christ should be put into Writing, that they might be more certainly convey'd; and that while they had the Testimony of those, *who were Eye-witnesses and Ministers of the Word.*

2. And so I come to the second Rule of discerning the Primitive Doctrine of Christ; *viz. The Writings of the Apostles, when Matters of Doctrine came to be contested, were the infallible Rule, whereby they were to judge, which was the true and genuine Doctrine of Christ.*

There are some who pretend, that the Apostle's Writings were meerly *Accidental and Occasional* things, but that the main Design was to lodge the great Assurance of the Doctrine of Christ in *Tradition* from one to another; and what they wrote was not to make any *Rule of Faith*, but only to give some good Advice to those Churches they wrote to.

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But I shall now prove that the Writings of the *Apostles* were intended by the Holy Ghost to be a *standing Rule*, whereby the Church was to judge which was the true and genuine Doctrine of Christ.

I. From the Reasons and Occasions of writing the *Books* of the *New-Testament*.

I. As to the *Gospels*, we must distinguish the *General Reason* of writing them, from the *particular Occasions* as to the several *Gospels*. The *general Reason* is to be drawn from the Divine Wisdom which inspired and guided them; the *particular Occasions* relate to the circumstances of writing them.

The *General Reason* is that which *Irenæus* gives, *viz.* That the *Gospel* Iræn. l. 3. c. 1. which they had first preached, was by the Will of God put into Writing, that it might be a *Foundation and Pillar* of our Faith. Not merely to keep up the Remembrance of it, which *Feuardentius* yields, and thereby overthrows the *Infallibility* of *Oral Tradition*; but that so it may be a certain Rule of Faith to all Ages. The *Evangelists* saith *St. Augustin*, were Aug. de Confess. E. vang. l. 1. c. 54. but *Christ's Hands*, which himself as the *Head*, directed in writing the *Gospels*, and therefore we are to look on the *Gospels* as his own *Hand-writing*. The *Holy Ghost*, saith he, directed the *Minds* of the *Evangelists*, as to the l. 2. c. 53. order and manner of their *Writing*. Which varied according to the *particular Occasions*, but yet were all subservient to the *General Reason*.

*St. Matthew* wrote the first *Gospel*, saith *Eusebius*, to the *Jews* to whom Euseb. Hist. l. 3. c. 24. he had preached, because going into other parts he would supply the want of his *Presence* among them by his *Writing*. What need this, if *Tradition* were a certain and infallible way of conveying the *Doctrine* of *Christ*?

*St. Chrysostom* saith, the *Jewish Christians* desired him to put into Writing Chrys. Hom. l. 1. in Matth. what they had heard him preach. Did not they understand the force of *Tradition* better? Or why should *St. Matthew* put them out of an infallible way? The *Author* of the imperfect *Work* on *St. Matthew* saith, Opus Imperfect. in Mar. in Prologo. they desired him to write his *Gospel*, that where-ever they went they might carry an *Account* of their *Faith* with them. *Clemens Alexandrinus* saith, Euseb. l. 2. c. 15. the occasion of writing *St. Mark's Gospel* was, that the *People* were not satisfied with an *unwritten delivery* of the *Holy Doctrine*, and therefore im-

portuned *Mark*, who was the *Disciple* of *St. Peter*, that he would leave a *Monument* of his *Doctrine* in *Writing*; which *St. Peter* understanding by *Revelation*, approved and confirmed his *Gospel* for the use of the *Churches*. *Origen* saith, he wrote it according to *St. Peter's directions*. *Epiphanius* Euseb. l. 6. c. 25. saith, by his *Authority*. *Athanasius* saith, it was dictated by him at *Rome*. Epiphanius. Her. 51.

It seems that *Peter* himself did not think fit to leave the *Doctrine* of *Christ* to an *Oral Tradition*, even at *Rome*, but *Irenæus* thinks it was written after *St. Peter's* decease, who therein differs from the rest, and shews how uncertain meer *Tradition* is. *Tertullian* saith, *St. Mark's Gospel* was attributed to *St. Peter*, and *St. Luke's* to *St. Paul*. Athanasius. in Synopsi. p. 155.

*St. Jerom* mentions the *Opinion* of some, that when *St. Paul* saith according to my *Gospel*, he means that of *St. Luke*. Tertul. c. Marc. l. 4. c. 5. Hieron. de Script. Eccl.

But *St. Luke* himself plainly gives an *Account* of the occasion of his writing. *St. Ambrose* thinks by those who had taken in hand to write of those things which were firmly believed among us, he means the *Authors* of the counterfeited *Gospels*, as that of the *Twelve Apostles* and *St. Matthias*. But we have no evidence that these were older than *St. Luke*; his meaning is, that in those parts where he was, there were some who did undertake to give an *Account* of the *Life* and *Actions* of *Christ*, who

wanted the Advantages which he had; having had great opportunities of knowing circumstances from *the Eye-witnesses*; and therefore he set himself to give an exact Relation of them, that not only *Theophilus*, but every one that answers his name *might know the certainty of those things wherein they had been instructed*. But, did not they know the certainty of these things by the Apostle's Preaching? Yes, but the things they heard might slip out of their Memories; and to prevent this, saith *Theophylact*, *St. Luke wrote his Gospel, that they might retain these things with greater certainty*. And words that are only spoken are more easily misunderstood; which *Maldonat* assigns, as one great Reason of the Evangelists writing their several Gospels.

*St. John* likewise gives an account himself of the Reason of his writing; and that the greatest imaginable. *But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his Name*. Why written that ye might believe? Did the Apostle in his old Age mistrust the Understandings, or the Memories of Christians? Was not the Apostle's Teaching sufficient to keep up the Principles of the Christian Faith in the hearts of the People; no, not while *St. John* himself was yet living? He had certainly a very mean opinion of Tradition, that thought it necessary for him to write that they might believe that *Jesus is the Son of God*. For there was no point of Faith more necessary than this, which was required of all Persons to be owned before Baptism.

Yet for all this, and whatever else can be said, *St. John* thought it necessary that these things be written that they might believe.

He lived the longest of any of the Apostles, and therefore saw how little Tradition was to be trusted; for it was already corrupted in so weighty a point as the Divinity of Christ.

*Cerintus* and his Followers allow'd the general Tradition of the Church, that *Jesus was the Son of God*; but then they gave their own sense of it, by extraordinary Favour and Adoption. And from hence the Fathers agree that *St. John* took occasion to write his Divine Gospel, to clear this Fundamental point of the Christian Faith.

And withall observing that the other Evangelists insisted chiefly on the Actions of Christ for one year, *viz. after John's Imprisonment*, he resumes the whole Matter, and adds those things which were omitted by the rest; that so the Church might be furnished with a full Relation of all that was necessary to compleat and establish the Faith of Christians.

2. As to the *Epistles*.

The first *Epistle* we read of in the Christian Church, (and in probability the first writing in the New Testament) was the *Decretal Epistle* of the Council of Jerusalem.

What should make the Apostles put these Decrees into Writing? They were very short, and concerned the Practices of Men, and withall were sent by *Barnabas* and *Paul*, and *Judas*, and *Silas*. Were not these sufficient to deliver the Apostle's Sense to the Churches, without Letters from them? What a pitifull thing did they take Oral Tradition to be, if they thought such Men could not by it give full satisfaction to the Churches of *Syria* and *Cilicia*, unless they sent it under their hands?

The *Epistle* to the *Romans* was written by *St. Paul* on purpose to clear some main Points of the Christian Doctrine, which were then warmly disputed between the Jews and the Christians, and between the Judaizing

Epiph.  
Har. 51.

Theophyl.  
in Luc.

Maldonat.  
Com. in E-  
vang. prol.

Joh. 20. 31.

Hierom.  
Proem. in  
Matt. h.  
De Script.  
Eccles.  
Epiph.  
Har. 51.  
Chrysof.  
Hom. 1.  
in Matth.  
Euseb. l. 3.  
c. 24.

Act. 15. 23.



daizing Christians and others, as about *Justification, Rejection of the Jews,* the *difference of Meats,* &c. And St. Paul took very needless pains in writing that excellent Epistle, if he knew of Christ's appointing a *Judge of Controversies* there; or if he thought Writing were not a certain way to make a Rule of Faith, whereby they were to judge in those Matters.

The first *Epistle* to the *Corinthians* was written not meerly to reprove their Factions and Disorders; but to direct them, and to establish and prove the Faith of the *Resurrection*, which was then contested among them. The *Epistle* was sent by *Stephanus* and *Fortunatus*, who could have carried the Apostle's Sense without his Writing; but there are many weighty things, besides the particular occasions which are of lasting concernment to the Church in all Ages; as there are likewise in his second Epistle to them. 1 Cor. 15. 12.

The *Epistle* to the *Galatians* was written on occasion of one of the greatest Points of controversy at that time, *viz.* the Use and Obligation of the Law of *Moses*. And St. Paul found by sad experience among them, that it was very possible for those who had the best Instructions, either to forget them, or to grow out of love with them, and to be fond of a change: else he would never have said, *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the Truth? And I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the Grace of Christ into another Gospel.* How! was it indeed possible for them to be removed, and to be so soon removed, who had received the Faith by the delivery of St. Paul himself? Then, for all that I can see, humane Nature taken with all its Advantages and Motives, and Evidences, is a very fallible thing; and if then it might be deceived, and that so easily and grossly; then much more in any following Age of the Church; unless humane Nature be mightily changed for the better, since the Apostle's times; or any Teachers since be more effectual, than the Apostles, and especially than St. Paul, *who laboured more abundantly than they all.* Gal. 3. 1. 1. 6. 1 Cor. 15. 10.

The *Epistle* to the *Ephesians*, though written upon a general Argument, yet doth suppose that they were in continual danger of being deceived; and tossed up and down, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine by the slight of Men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive. Ep. 4. 14.

And therefore he advises them to be upon their guard, and to have their Armour about them, and one choice part of it, *is the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.* 6. 17.

The *Philippians* were assaulted by a rude, violent, head-strong Faction of Judaizers; which the Apostle bids them to beware of; and writes his *Epistle* to them for that purpose, and he exhorts them to stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind striving together for the Faith of the Gospel. Phil. 3. 2. 1. 27.

In the second *Epistle* to the *Thessalonians*, and in both *Epistles* to *Timothy*, he gives notice of a great Defection from the Christian Faith; he describes the manner of it, *that it shall be with signs and lying words, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth; that they shall speak lies in hypocrisie, and forbid to marry, and command to abstain from meats, being evil Men, having a form of godliness, and denying the power of it.* I meddle not now with the time when this Apostacy began; but from hence, it is evident that St. Paul supposed, that those who at first received the Christian Faith by Tradition from the Apostles themselves, might notwithstanding 2 Thess. 2. 10. 1 Tim. 4. 2, 3. 2 Tim. 3. 1, 5.

standing through their own weakness and folly, and the Artifices of Deceivers be drawn from it; and that to prevent such mischievous consequences, he knew no better means than a written Rule, which he tells

<sup>2</sup> Tim. 3. *Timothy was able to make him wise to Salvation; and to make the Man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good Work.*  
16, 17.

And to name no more the *Colossians* were set upon by some who thought to refine Christianity; or at least to make it more passable in the World, and therefore would have introduced into it some Rites of the Jews, some Austerities of the Gentiles, some ways of Worship which would recommend them to their Adversaries; and upon this occasion he writes this Epistle to them to convince them that Christianity alone was far beyond any Mixtures of the Fancies or Traditions of Men, and therefore he could give them no better Advice, than as they had first received the Doctrine of Christ to continue in it, or in the words of the Text, *As they had received Christ Jesus the Lord, so to walk in him.*

The design of what I have said is, that although the *Gospels* and *Epistles* were written upon particular occasions; yet those occasions were so great and considerable; and the Assistance of the Holy Ghost did so direct the Hands and Pens of the Evangelists and Apostles in writing them, that what they have therein delivered contains a compleat Rule of the true and genuine Faith, as it was at first delivered to the Church.

<sup>2</sup> Theff. 2. *But against this, it is objected, that St. Paul himself charged the Thessalonians to stand fast and hold the Traditions which they have been taught either by Word or by his Epistles. From whence it appears, that there were other Traditions to be held, that were not written.*  
15.

The force of all this will be taken away, if we consider when that Epistle was written; viz. one of the first which St. Paul wrote, and soon after the former Epistle to the *Thessalonians*; which was some time before St. Luke's Gospel, which was first received in the Churches of Greece, planted by St. Paul. Therefore all the proper Doctrine of Christ himself, and all that relates to his Life and Actions were then but Traditions among them; and therefore St. Paul had great Reason then to require them to stand fast to the Traditions they had been taught; i. e. to the Doctrine of Christ they had received in that manner.

*But it is urged, that he mentions before, something he had said about Antichrists coming when he was with them, v. 5.*  
<sup>1</sup> Cor. 1. 4. c. 5.

If this be allow'd, it will be more against than for Tradition. For what is become of that Tradition? If it be lost, then it follows that Tradition is no infallible Way of conveyance; and therefore we have more Reason to adhere to a written Word.

2. Which leads us to the second Reason from which I designed to prove, that there ought to be a written Rule for discerning true primitive Christianity; and that is from the notorious uncertainty of meer Tradition. I say, *notorious*, because there never was any Trial made of it, but it failed, even when it had the greatest Advantages.

I might insist upon the Tradition of the first Ages of the World; when Men's lives were so long, and the Principles of the Natural Religion so few; and yet both before and after the Flood, Mankind was strangely degenerated from them.

I might insist on many Instances in the first Ages of the Christian Church; so many, that scarce one can be produced wherein they pleaded meer Tradition, but they were mistaken in it; As about the *Millennium*,

nium, the Age of Christ, the time of Easter (on one side or other) the communicating Infants. For St. Augustin quotes Apostolical Tradition for it. Aug de Peccat. Meritis. l. 1. c. 4.

But I shall wave all these, and only mention a very necessary and important thing, which was a long time trusted to Tradition, and yet they differ'd so much about it, as evidently proved, that meer Tradition was no infallible Means of conveyance. And that is about the Apostle's Creed which was to be repeated by all that were to be baptized.

We have many plain Testimonies to prove, that this was not to be written; but to be conveyed from one to another, by an Oral Tradition; (a) St. Hierom, (b) St. Augustin, (c) Ruffinus, all affirm it.

(a) In Symbolo Fidei & Spei nostræ, quod ab Apostolis traditum, non scribitur in Charta & Atramento, sed in tabulis cordis carnalibus. Hieron. ad Pammachium advers. Errores Joh. Hierosol.

(b) Nec ut eadem verba Symboli tenentis, ullo modo debetis scribere, sed audiendo perdiscere; nec cum didiceritis scribere, sed memoriâ semper tenere & recolare. August. de Diversis Serm. 75.

(c) Idcirco denique hæc non scribi chartulis & membranâ, sed requiri credentium cordibus tradiderunt, ut certum esset hæc neminem ex lectione, quæ interdum pervenire etiam ad infideles solet; sed ex Apostolorum traditione didicisse. Ruffinus in Symbol.

And the Creed was commonly then called (d) the Rule of Faith; which shewed that they looked on all the Articles therein contained, as the Standard of necessary Points.

(d) Tertul. de Præscript. c. 12, 13, 14, 21. De Virgin. n. 15. Vol. c. 1. Advers. Præveam c. 2. August. Serm. 59. 186. 213. Retract. l. 2. c. 3. Enchirid. de Fide, n. 15. De Symbol. ad Catech. Ruffin. in Proëm.

And yet there is a plain and considerable difference in the Ancient Creeds; some Articles being in some which were not in others: Although we have Reason to believe the necessary Points were at first the same in all. Or else the several Churches must have different Rules of Faith.

The Church of Jerusalem was called (c) the Mother of all Churches by the General Council of Constantinople; and in the Creed there delivered to the Catechumens. (d) St. Cyril mentions the Eternal Generation of the Son before all Worlds; and so doth (e) Eusebius at Casarea in the Creed, which he saith, he learnt at his Baptism, which was long before the Nicene Creed. (f) Cassian makes it a part of that Creed which the Apostles delivered to the Church, and was particularly received in the Church of Antioch.

But no such thing was delivered in the Western Creeds as far as now appears, by what St. Augustin, Ruffinus, and others say in their Expositions of it.

St. Jerom writing against the Bishop of Jerusalem, urges him with the Creed, (g) (no doubt that which was received in his own Church) and he saith, it consisteth of three main Points; the Confession of the Trinity, the Unity of the Church, and the Resurrection of the Flesh.

And the Creed of the Church of Aquileia went no farther, saith, (h) Ruffinus; nor some old Copies of the Roman Creed.

But Marcellus of Ancyra had Eternal Life in his (i) Creed, and so had (k) Cyril of Jerusalem; so had the African Church in St. (l) Augustin's time; so had the Church of Ravenna; but not the Church of Turin; nor the Gallican Churches; if Maximus Taurinensis, and Venantius Fortunatus explained all the Articles of their Creeds.

Ruffinus confesses the Article of Descent into Hell, was not in the Roman, nor in any of the Eastern Creeds.

The Creeds of *Jerusalem* and *Aquileia* had not the *Communion of Saints*; nor those of *Marcellus* and (m) *Epiphanius*.

(m) *Epiph. Ancorat.*  
 (n) *August. de Fide & Symbolo. Et de Symbolo Serm. 243.*  
 The Title of *Catholick* was not added to the *Church* in the Creed in *St. (n) Augustin's* time; for he makes it a *Periphrasis, utique Catholicam*, from whence probably it came to be added afterwards.

*Ruffinus* takes no notice of it, and it was not extant in the old Copies of the *Roman Creed*; nor in that of *Marcellus Ancyranus*.

(o) *De Symbolo ad Carth. c. 1.*  
 These things I mention, not in the least to shake the Faith of the Articles of the *Apostle's Creed*; which (o) *St. Augustin* saith was gathered out of *Scriptures*, and is agreeable to them; but to shew what an uncertain way of conveyance meer Oral Tradition is, when a thing so easily remembered, so constantly used, of so much weight and consequence, fell into such varieties in the greatest Churches, while they were so scrupulous about the writing of it.

What cause have we then to be thankful to God, that hath taken so much care of his Church, as to provide us an infallible written Rule in the Holy Scriptures, whereby we certainly know, what the true Primitive Christianity was, which was delivered by Christ and his Apostles?

But here is a great difficulty to be removed, as to the written Word.

*How can we be certain, we have it, if not by Tradition? and if Tradition be so uncertain, how can we be made certain by it, that we have that written Word which the Apostles delivered? For might not that fail in this, as well as the Creed? And then what security can we have for our Faith?*

In Answer to this, I shall shew,

1. What Advantage things that are written have, as to the certainty of conveyance above things meerly committed to Memory and Tradition.

2. What Advantage the Scriptures have, above any other things committed to Writing as to the certainty of their conveyance.

1. As to the Advantage things written have above those committed to Memory and Tradition only. Which will appear by these things.

1. It was the way God himself made choice of, where the Reason for Tradition was stronger; I mean as to the Ten Commandments, which were short and plain, and easie to be remembered, and very agreeable to the Sense and General Interest of Mankind; yet the Wise God who perfectly understood the Nature of Man, would not leave the Ten Commandments to an Oral Tradition, but God delivered to *Moses* Two Tables of Stone written with the Finger of God; and on them he wrote the Ten Commandments. What a vain and superfluous thing were this, if Oral and Practical Tradition were infallible? But God's own pitching upon this way, after so long a Trial of Mankind in the other; is a Demonstration of the greater certainty of it, if we suppose that God aimed at the benefit of Mankind by it.

2. When Religion was corrupted among the Jews, the only way of restoring it was by a written Book of the Law.

2 Kings 22. 8. 23. 2, 3.  
 As we find in the case of *Josiah's* Reformation, which was made by the Book of the Law, which was found in the House of the Lord.

This was the Rule by which *Hilkiah* the High-Priest, thought it necessary for *Josiah* to go by; and not by any Tradition left among them concerning the Law which God had given by *Moses*.

Joh. 5. 39.  
 3. This was that which our Saviour appealed to in all his Disputes; *search the Scriptures*, saith he to the *Jews*; not run to your Traditions, for those were then very corrupt, especially about the *Messias*, as that he was to be a Temporal Prince, &c. which was then a dangerous and funda-

fundamental Mistake; and therefore Christ appeals from them to the Scriptures; *And they are they which testify of me. Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me; but if ye believe not his Writings, how shall ye believe my Words?* And our Saviour severely checks the Pharisees for regarding their own Traditions more than the written Law, *And yet they pretended to an Oral Tradition down from Moses; as the Jews do to this day; and none are more grossly deceived than they.* 46.  
47.  
Matth. 19.  
3. 2.

4. The general Sense and Experience of Mankind agrees herein, that all matters of consequence are more certainly preserved by Writings than by meer Words. There is no Invention hath been more valued by the wiser part of Mankind than that of *Letters*; because it is of such excellent use for conveying the sense of our Minds at a distance to others: All men have so great a Mistrust, either of the capacity or memory, or fidelity of others; that what they would have done with security they commit to Writing. And whatever we truly understand of the Ages before us, we are beholden to Writing for it; all those memorable Actions, and Institutions, either of *Philosophy* or *Religion* which were not written, are long since buried in Oblivion, without possibility of a Resurrection.

But where they have been committed to Writing they are preserved after so many Ages; and by it we certainly know the History of the *Patriarchs*, and the strange Revolutions that happened from the beginning of the World. By it, we converse with the wisest Persons of former times; and are able to justify the Scriptures by the concurrent Testimonies of other Writers. By it, we are enabled to interpret Prophecies, and to make plain their Accomplishments, which without it, we could never make out. Yea by it, the Wisdom of those is preserved for the benefit of Mankind, who thought fit to write nothing themselves, as *Socrates* and *Pythagoras*, but their Disciples took care in time to write their Doctrines. So that we have the general Consent of the wisest Part of Mankind, that Writing is a far more certain way of conveyance than meer Tradition.

2. And especially in our case where there are so many particular Advantages, as to the *Holy Scriptures*, above any other Writings.

1. From the special Providence of God, with respect to them; for since it is agreed by all Christians, that these were written by Divine Inspiration, it is most reasonable to believe, that a more than ordinary care would be taken to preserve them.

And therefore to suppose any Books of Scripture to be lost, which contained any necessary Points of Faith, is a great Reflexion on Divine Providence. For, if God watches over his Church, he cannot be supposed to let such Books be lost which were designed for the Universal and lasting Benefit of his Church.

2. From the mighty Esteem which the Church of God had always for them; for, they built their hopes of Heaven upon the Promises contained in them. The Book of Scripture was their Evidence for their future Inheritance; the Foundation of their Hope, and Rule of their Faith; their Defence against Assaults and Temptations; their Counsellor in cases of Difficulty; their Support under Troubles; and their surest Guide to a happy Eternity; and therefore the Primitive Christians chose rather to endure any Torments than basely to betray it, and give it up to their Enemies.

3. From the early Disputes that were about them: Which shews that they were no Invention of After-times; nor were brought into the World by Stealth and Art; for they endured the greatest shock of opposition at first, while the Matters of Fact concerning them were the most easily proved. And having passed the severe Scrutiny of the first Ages, when so many counterfeit Writings were sent abroad, the following Ages could have no reason to call their Authority in question.

4. From the general Consent of divided Churches about them. It might have pleased God to have kept his Church from those unhappy Breaches which have been in all Parts of the Christian World; but the East, and the West, the North and the South can all bear Testimony to the sad Divisions of Christendom; and those of many Ages standing. But yet we have this considerable Advantage by them; that we can have no Reason to mistrust a conspiracy where the several Bodies are so much divided.

5. From the great internal Satisfaction which the Minds of good Men have concerning them; and which no other Writing can pretend to give. For here we read of the Promise of Divine Assistance to sincere and humble Minds. And that Assistance carries a *Lumen Fidei* into the Mind; as *Aquinas* calls it 2. 2. a 3. ad 2. and by that, he saith, *the Mind is united to Truth, that its Assent is only fixed upon it; and therefore there is no danger of Damnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, and are thus illuminated by Faith in him.* Not that this is an Argument to convince others, who have not that inward Sense which they have; but the same holy Spirit which did at first indite them, may give such an inward and effectual Testimony as to the Truth of the Matter contained in them; that from thence they may firmly conclude these Books to contain the Word of God. And that Assurance which the Minds of good Men have from the Influence of Divine Grace, may be more effectual and powerful in them, than all the pretended Infallibility or Demonstration in the World. It is certain those cannot be deceived whom the Holy Spirit teacheth; and the best and wisest of the Antient School-men did make the great firmness and certainty of Faith not to depend on outward Motives, but on inward Grace; which so inlightned the Mind; and fixed the Inclinations of the Soul, that nothing is able to remove it. This sort of Faith is no blind Assent; but after all the Evidence which it hath to make its Assent reasonable; it takes so fast a hold of Divine Truths by discerning the excellency and value of them, that he that hath it is willing to let go any thing rather than that; and although the Apprehension of Faith be not so clear as that of Science; yet the *Hypostasis*, as the Apostle calls it, may be so firm, that no Temptations may be able to shake it. And he that can die for his Religion hath a stronger and better Faith, than he that thinks himself never so infallible in the Grounds of it. That is a true Divine Faith *which purifies the Heart*, and therefore enlightens the Mind; which *works by Love*, and not by cavilling and wrangling about the Grounds of it; *which overcomes the World*, and not that which is overcome by the Temptations of it. And such a Faith, and only such a one will carry us to Heaven; when, if it were possible for us to have the utmost Infallibility in the Act of believing; yet if it did not work effectually on our Hearts and Lives, we might go infallibly to Hell.

And so I shall conclude this Discourse with the second Sense of the Obligation which lies on those *who have received Christ Jesus the Lord,*

so to walk in him : i. e. to improve their sound Faith into the Practice of a good Life.

For alas! What advantage will it be to us, to have the most Primitive and Apostolical *Faith*, if our *Works* be not answerable to it? *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, saith Christ, and do not the things which I say?* Why do we pretend to receive *Christ Jesus the Lord*, if we do not observe his Commands? *It is good, saith St. Paul, to be zealously affected always in a good thing.* And no doubt our *Faith* is such; but then let us be zealous of good *Works* too, that we may shew our selves to be *that peculiar People who are redeemed by Christ Jesus.* So that our Obligation arises every way from *Christ Jesus the Lord, to walk in him*; if we consider him as *our Lord*, so we are to obey him; if as *Christ Jesus*, so he died for us *to redeem us from all iniquity.* We can have no pretence to live in our sins, if we have received him who commands us to forsake them; for then we receive and reject him at the same time. *Let every one that names the Name of Christ, depart from iniquity,* saith St. Paul, what should those then do that profess *to receive him as their Lord*, who are thereby bound to yield obedience to his Laws? one of the great causes of the Degeneracy of the Heathen World was the separating *Religion* and *Morality*; when this was left to the Schools of Philosophers to instruct men in, whereas their Religion consisted only of some Solemn Rites and Sacrifices. Let us have a care of as dangerous a Separation between *Faith* and *Works*, or which is all one, between *receiving Christ, and doing his Will.* For those are the proper *Works* of the Gospel, wherein we own *Christ as our Lord*, and do them because he commands us. And the Apostle hath summ'd up the *whole Duty of Christians* in those comprehensive words, *Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* To whom, &c.

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# SERMON XXV.

Preached before the

# QUEEN

A T

# WHITE-HALL,

February 22. 168<sup>8</sup><sub>9</sub>.

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I PET. IV. 18.

*And if the Righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear?*

**T**HIS Epistle was written by St. Peter for the Incouragement of Christians under all their Sufferings; but these Words seem to carry so much Terrour and Severity in them, as though none but Martyrs and Confessors could have any Reason to hope for Salvation, all others were to be left in Despair. Although Mankind be not easily satisfied concerning the Punishment denounced against the *Ungodly and Sinner*, yet the Justice of God, the Equity of his Commands, the Freedom of their Choice, the Contempt of Grace, and their wilful and obstinate Impenitency take away all just Cause of Complaint: But, that the *Righeous should scarcely be saved*, seems hardly reconcilable with the Grace, and Design, and Promises of the Gospel. For the *Righteous* here are not vain, proud, self-conceited Hypocrites, such who *think they need no Repentance*, but such who by the Grace of God were brought off from their former Sins, and were redeemed from their vain Conversation with the precious Blood of Christ, who had purified their Souls in obeying the Truth through the Spirit; Who were a chosen Generation, a royal Priesthood, an holy Nation, a peculiar People; yet of such as these it is said, *if the righteous scarcely be saved*. But how can this agree with the infinite Goodness and Mercy of God declared in the Gospel, whereby Sinners are courted and encouraged to repent with the Hopes and Promise of Salvation? Did not Christ come to save Sinners, and St. Paul call this a faithful saying and worthy of all acception; and yet

1 Pet. i. 18,  
19, 20.  
G. 2. v. 9.

1 Tim. i.  
15.

after



after all, *shall the Righteous scarcely be saved?* What Joy in Heaven Luke 15.  
*can there be over one Sinner that repents,* if after his Repentance it 7. 10.  
 be so hard to come to Heaven? Doth not Christ himself invite those  
 who are *wearry, and heavy laden, to come to him,* with a Promise that *he* Matth. 11.  
*will give rest to their Souls?* But what Rest can they have, who not- 28.  
 withstanding their coming to him, do with so much difficulty attain to  
 Eternal Rest? How can that be said to be *an easie yoke, and a light bur-*  
*then,* which is of it self so hard to be born, and the Reward which is to v. 30.  
 make it easie so hard to be attained?

If it be said that *this Expression, that the Righteous are scarcely saved,*  
 is to be understood of some Sufferings, and Persecutions, *which the Chri-*  
*stians were then to undergo,* and it was very hard for *any though never so*  
*righteous, to escape;* and that to this, v. 17: refers, I answer, That this  
 doth not clear the Difficulty; For from whence doth this Necessity of  
 Suffering arise? Is it not enough to repent and forsake our Sins, but we  
 must undergo some Punishment for them in this Life, although God re-  
 mits that of the World to come? But how is this consistent with the  
 Fulness of Christ's Satisfaction, and the Freeness of God's Remission of  
 Sins? And if God's Justice be satisfied, and the Sins be forgiven, what  
 need can there be that Persons must here suffer for their Sins before they  
 can come to Heaven?

So that for the clearing this Subject these things must be spoken to;

- I. In what Sense the *Righteous* are said to be *scarcely saved.*
- II. How this is consistent with the Grace of the Gospel.
- III. What encouragement there is for us to hope for Salvation, when  
 the *Righteous* are said to be *scarcely saved.*

I. In what sense the *Righteous* are said to be *scarcely saved.* That may  
 be understood Two ways;

(1.) With respect to accidental Difficulties arising from the particu-  
 lar Circumstances of Times and Seasons.

(2.) With respect to the General Terms of Salvation, which are  
 common to all Persons and Times.

(1.) With respect to accidental Difficulties arising from the particular  
 Circumstances of Times and Persons. For the Difficulties of Religion  
 are not alike in all Times, nor to all Persons; for they are not like a  
 Geometrical Measure, which is always exactly the same; but rather  
 like a Voyage at Sea, which is to be managed by the same Compass  
 and to the same Port; but it sometimes proves calm and pleasant,  
 and at other times stormy and tempestuous. Which chiefly happens,  
 when a Religion appears New, or goes about to reform the Old; for  
 then it is sure to meet with all the Opposition, which the Passions,  
 and Interests, and Prejudices of partial Men can raise against it. It's  
 true; he that *still the Raging of the Sea, and the Madnes of the People,*  
 can, when he pleases, calm the most violent Passions of Mankind, and  
 make way for the Reception of Truth in their Minds; but he thinks fit  
 by such means to try and discover what is in Men. Who never shew  
 their Passions more violently and unreasonably than when they are mask'd  
 under a Pretence of Zeal against *Herese and Innovation.* For that blinds  
 their Understandings, corrupts their Wills, inflames their Passions, har-  
 dens their Hearts, and shuts up all Bowels of Pity and Compassion to-  
 wards Brethren: Thus it was among the *Jews* towards the Christians,

both in *Judæa*, and in the several places of their Dispersion: For they looked on them as Apostates and Hereticks, and treated them, not only with the utmost Scorn and Contempt, but with all the Fury and Rage imaginable, and where their own Power fell short, they called in the Assistance of the *Roman* Governours, representing the Christians to them, as an Upstart and pernicious Sect, seditious and turbulent, and therefore ought by all means to be suppressed: By such Insinuations the poor Christians in the *Eastern* Provinces of the *Jewish* Dispersion, were miserably harassed and proceeded against as Malefactors. Thus it was at that time when *St. Peter* wrote his Epistle to the *Jewish* Christians, who were scattered throughout *Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia*, where there were abundance of *Jews*, and many Converts, but very hardly used among them. *St. Peter* having been employed much among them, (*the Apostleship of the Circumcision being committed to him*) and being withdrawn into the Kingdom of *Parthia*, where he had planted a Church at *Babylon*, (not so desolate at that time, as not to be sufficient for such a Number, as appears by *Strabo* and *Josephus*) from thence he writes this excellent Epistle for the Advice and Comfort of the suffering Christians. He adviseth them to behave themselves with great Prudence and Care of their Actions, to give no advantage against themselves, by doing any ill things; and then, if it pleased God to call them out to suffer, they ought not to murmur, or complain, or mistrust his Gracious Providence towards them, but \* *commit themselves to God in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator*. And if they did think it hard for them to suffer these things, they ought to consider, there was a wise Director of them above, who had before-hand appointed such a Series of Events, that although their Enemies rejoiced to see them suffer in the first place, yet their Turn would come not

Although *Babylon* were very much exhausted, by the Neighbourhood of *Seleucia* first, and afterwards of *Ctesiphon*; yet I see no Reason to conclude that *Babylon* was not then capable of having a Church in it, when *S. Peter* wrote this Epistle. For *Josephus*, lib. 18. owns, that there was in *Babylon* *Ἰουδαίων* *Iudæion* in the time when *Hyrchanus* was sent thither; and out of such a Multitude of *Jews* a Church might easily be gathered. The Calamities which befell the *Jews* of those Parts afterwards rather reach to the Country than the City of *Babylon*. And when such Numbers of *Jews* are allowed to have been after them in *Ctesiphon, Nearda, and Nisibis*, which were all Cities in those Parts, I see no cause to question that there were great Numbers of *Jews* at that time in *Babylon*; since even in *Trajan's* time, they are confessed to have been very numerous in *Mesopotamia*, *Strabo*, lib. 16. saith, that a great part of *Babylon* was deserted in his time, and so it might well be, and leave room enough for a Christian Church to be there notwithstanding. So that no reason appears sufficient to me to take *Babylon* in any other sense, than for the City generally known by that Name, without flying to any Mystical Sense, or a Strong place in *Egypt* bearing that Name; there being less probability of a Church in a Garrison, as *Strabo* describes it, than in the Remains of so great a City.

\* *1 Pet. 4. 19.* long after, and then these Enemies of the Gospel would feel the Severity of God's Wrath and Displeasure against them. Which is the meaning of the foregoing Verse.

*For the time is come that Judgment must begin at the House of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? i. e. Christ hath foretold Desolation and Ruine to come upon the Jewish Nation, for rejecting him when he came to save them; but he withal saith, that before these things, they shall lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the Synagogues, and into Prisons, being brought before Kings and Rulers for my Name's sake. Which implies a severe Persecution of the Christian Church, begun by the Jews, but carried on by the Governours of Kingdoms and Provinces. And therefore saith the Apostle, although the time be now come that Judgment begins at the House of God, yet it will not end there; but that which is only a Cup of Trembling and Astonishment to them shall be a Cup of Fury and Destruction to the obstinate and impenitent*

*Luke 21. 12.*

tent *Jews*. The case was hard to the poor Christians, but it would be much more severe towards their cruel Persecutors; for if the *Righteous*, whom God loves, meet with such sharp usage by his Permission for a time, the Day will come when God will avenge the Cause of his suffering People, and make their *ungodly and perfidious* Enemies feel the smart of his displeasure in such manner that they shall not know where to hide themselves, *Where shall the sinner and ungodly appear.*

But that which I observe from hence is, that there are some accidental Circumstances which depend on Divine Providence, which may make the condition of some Men, as to Salvation, much more difficult than that of others: For it is no such easie matter *to go through many* Acts 14. *Tribulations into the Kingdom of God*, i. e. to be content to be contemned and reproached as the worst of Men; and to be torn from Friends and Relations, and all the Comforts of Life; to be cast into loathsome Prisons, and more loathsome Company in them; to be in continual expectation of such cruel Usage and Torments, as make Death to be look'd on as their best Friend and most seasonable Deliverer.

If sufferings do not rise so high, yet when Men cannot keep Faith and a good Conscience, without hazarding the loss of what Mankind are apt to set too great a value upon, their Ease, and Riches, and Expectations in this World, even these make it harder for such Persons to get to Heaven; because Sincerity and Constancy are the necessary Conditions of it, which may be tried much more in some than it is in others: We must all have the same Journey's-end, if we hope to get to Heaven, but some may meet with a freer Road, and a calmer Season, and better Company, in their Journey than others. However it happens we must go through all, and not be discouraged at any appearance of Difficulties upon our way.

But herein Mankind are apt to be deceived, as though all the Difficulties lay in a suffering Condition; whereas a soft, and careless, and voluptuous Life is rather more dangerous to their Souls, because persons are less apt to suspect their Danger. He that is set upon by force and violence endeavours to defend himself as well as he can; but he that is betrayed under a pretence of Kindness is drawn into his Ruine before he is aware, and goes on chearfully to his own destruction. Prosperity hath the true Nature of an *Opiate*, for it stupifies and pleases at the same time. The Temptations of the suffering Side are apt to alarm, awake, and rouse up the sleepy Powers of the Soul; whereas the gentle and easie Condition of Life either lays them asleep, by a kind of Intoxication, or so diverts them from all serious things, as puts them out of the very way to Heaven. For, the first thing in it is a steady and serious Resolution of Mind to do what lies in them to go thither; which can never be done without a true Consideration of the Vanities of this World, how pleasing soever; and a fixed and settled Judgment, preferring the Happiness of Heaven before all the most alluring Pleasures of this Life.

So that the different Circumstances of Life do make the way of Salvation more difficult to some than to others.

But this is not all; for there are many things which make it more difficult to some than to others, which are of another Nature. Some Tempers are more flexible and pliable than others; more capable of hearkning to Reason; and more apt to reflect on their own Actions; whereas others are naturally stiff and obstinate, who stick as fast to an  
Opinion

Opinion or prejudice which they have once taken up, as if they were fatally determined to it; and such as these can hardly ever be convinced they are in an Errour, unless by a Power superiour to Nature. Some again, are very easily convinced of a Fault, but very hardly reclaimed; for that Facility of Temper which makes them easie to be convinced, lays them open to the next Temptation, which they are not able to withstand. These are always repenting and amending and beginning to reform, but without the Grace of God, not able to go through with it. Some are modest and bashfull Sinners, whom Fear and Shame may restrain; others are so hardned and impudent in their Wickedness, that they deny even the very first Principles of Morality as well as Religion, and not only refuse to hearken to Reproof, but reject it with Scorn and Indignation. And it cannot be supposed that the Grace of God, working on Men's minds in a way suitable to them, should have as easie an Admittance into one as into the other; for the one are like a House with doors shut, but easily opened; the other like a House not only shut, but bolted and barracado'd.

Again, some have had the Advantage of a Pious and Religious Education, by which the Principles of Piety and Vertue have made an early Impression on their Minds, and have been a continual Check upon evil Inclinations; and if they have been too weak to subdue them, yet they have been strong enough to prevent their Extravagancies, or to bring them to a speedy Repentance, and to take up firmer Resolutions; and such are more easily brought to themselves and settled in a virtuous course of Life. But the Generality of Mankind, thro' a wretched Carelesness, mind not the early Improvement of their Children in what is good; and what Education they give them tends to any thing more than the planting the Sense of God, and true Religion, and Vertue in them. It were well, if they would but let Nature alone in their Children; but instead of that, they often place such about them, who humour them in their worst Inclinations, and give them an early Taste of Profaneness and Irreligion; so that when they come into the World, they run into all Manner of Wickedness, and commit it with Greediness, having so quick a Relish of it; and then indeed it is a very hard matter to bring them to Repentance; for that is to take Shame and Dishonour to themselves, to say they have been Fools, and have done wickedly; and rather than do this, they chuse to go on in their Impieties, *and treasure up wrath against the day of wrath.*

Those who magnifie the Freedom of Will in Mankind in this degenerate State, seem to consider them only in Theory and Speculation; not as they are, but as they ought to have been. It is like that which they call the Spring in some Bodies, which are apt to dilate and expand themselves, but may be easily oppressed with such a weight as makes it impossible for them to enlarge themselves till it be removed. There is no doubt in Mankind, considered in it self, a Power of acting according to Reason, which is the truest Freedom, (for a Power of acting otherwise is Weakness and Folly,) but what through the Natural Propensity to Evil; what through the power of bad Examples; what through the violence of some Tempers and Passions; what through the Cloudiness of some Understandings from bodily Distempers; what through the strength of evil Habits, and corrupt Dispositions, there is scarce such a thing as Freedom of Will left, especially to Matters of Salvation. So that if the Scripture did not so plainly express the Necessity of Divine Grace for the Conversion of Sinners (as it doth,) the mere Consideration of the  
state

state of humane Nature would make me believe it, supposing that any part of Mankind be designed to be fitted for Heaven. For although the Difficulties be not alike in all, yet, of one kind or other, they are such as cannot be overcome by our selves, without the Power of Divine Grace *Exciting, Preventing, and Assisting* of us.

(2.) Having thus shewed what Difficulties there are which arise from the different Circumstances of Times and Persons, I am now to consider those which arise from the Terms of Salvation, which are common to all Persons and Times.

Here we must suppose Salvation to be thing the aimed at, as the chief End or Happiness of such Men; and here are two Kinds of Difficulties to be enquired into;

(1.) Such as are implied in the general Pursuit of Happiness:

(2.) Such as immediately relate to this Kind of Happiness.

(1.) Such as are implied in the general Pursuit of Happiness: For Happiness is not a thing of Chance or Necessity, but a Matter of Choice and Design. It is a vulgar Mistake (and I wish it were only among the Vulgar) to account those happy, who are fortunate: But this Notion of Happiness was unanimously rejected by all the ancient Moralists. Some of them indeed have thought it repugnant to common Sense, to call those happy who were under great Calamities, *i. e.* who were, in the Sence of Mankind, miserable: But then they utterly denied, that the best outward Circumstances could make a Man happy; for that must depend upon the Temper of a Man's Mind, and his Improvement in Vertue. There are some things which the Moralists agreed in, which may be of great use to us for clearing the Christian Doctrine in this Matter about the Difficulty of attaining Salvation.

(1.) That Happiness did consist in one uniform Design of Life, *i. e.* that a Man must chuse one proper and chief End to himself, and so order his Thoughts and Actions that he may attain it. And therefore the dissolute and careless Liver, that minds or thinks of nothing but Eating, and Drinking, and Sleeping, and passing away his Time, was no more capable of Happiness than a Brute, which exceeds him in that which he accounts the Happiness of Life.

(2.) That there must be a carefull and attentive Mind to pursue this Design. And that is by keeping close to those Maxims, which were laid down as necessary to attain it. For, according to their different Notions, they had different Maxims, or Rules of Practice, either as to Vertue or Pleasure, and as Men did observe these, they were nearer to their Happiness: But if they broke their Rules, they must blame themselves if they missed of it.

(3.) That any Man who desired to be happy, must above all things take pains about himself: For without that they concluded it impossible for a Man to be happy, let his outward Condition in the World be what it would: For that was too uncertain a Foundation to build such a Structure upon. Therefore it was necessary for any one that pretended to Happiness, to have a true Notion of what conduced to it in his Mind; and to bring his Passions into Order. For all the World cannot make one whose Passions are violent and extravagant, to be happy; no more than him to be a sound and healthfull Man, that hath a Fever, and a Dropsie, and Convulsions, at the same time upon him. For the Violence of Lust is an inward burning Fever; Covetousness, or an insatiable Desire of Riches, a perpetual Dropsie, which encreases the thirst  
by

by an endeavour to quench it; an excessive Anger is a Convulsion of those Powers of the Soul which ought to be sedate, and composed, in any one who pretends to Happiness. But when they considered the Force of natural Inclinations, they found it was no easie matter to make the unreasonable part to be governed by the reasonable. For the less of Reason, the more Wilfulness and Stubbornness, and therefore the harder to be brought to Reason and to be govern'd by it. And herein lay the main Difficulty; and after all their Arguments, and Rules, and Directions, humane Nature was found too refractory to submit; and the violence of Man's Passions overthrew all the plausible Schemes of Happiness which the Philosophers had set up. To which I add,

(4.) That those who consulted most the Ease and Pleasure of Mankind, were forced to put Men upon some hard and unpleasant things to make any thing like Happiness to consist in Pleasure. For they cast off all Riot and Excess, all Intemperance and Luxury; because the Pain which followed exceeded the Pleasure; and therefore they made Temperance and Chastity necessary to the true Pleasure of Life. They reduced the Happiness of Pleasure to a fixed and settled State, and so took it off from that which was only sensual. They brought Men's desires within so narrow a Compass, that the true Lovers of Pleasure would abhor such Confinements as they made necessary. And although they could never conquer the Fears of invisible Powers, and of Death, yet they thought no Happiness was to be had without it. So that all were agreed, that it was impossible to attain to any thing that looked like Happiness without some real Difficulty, which was necessary to be undergone, although the Success were uncertain.

(2.) Let us now consider the Difficulties relating to Salvation, or that Happiness which Christians expect. And here I shall shew,

(1.) That it is far more reasonable to go through Difficulties, for the sake of it.

(2.) That they are not such, but that we may reasonably hope to overcome them.

(1.) It is more reasonable to expect Difficulties in the way of Salvation. For the more excellent and desirable the Happiness is, the more it is worth the while for us to take pains about it; especially when there is a Certainty of attaining it. The Moralists had but very dark, and confused, and uncertain Notions of Happiness; something they saw, but with a very glimmering light: They found that all Men desired it, and wise Men sought after it; but wherein it lay, and how to be attained, they could not agree. The most considering Men were convinced it must be in the best part of our selves, and that is our Minds, and in the greatest Perfection of that, *viz.* Vertue and Goodness. But they meet with insuperable Difficulties in the way to it, and the best among them sadly lamented the State of humane Nature, after all the Pains and Endeavours they had used to rectifie their Opinions, and to subdue their Passions. For they found it too restiff and untractable, too much under the Sway and Dominion of the sensitive Appetite, for them ever to hope by the mere Power of Reason to bring it into such Subjection, as to pretend to a total Conquest. And those who refined Pleasure so much, as to make it a Happiness fit for Mankind to own, did make a Happiness just as they made their Gods, *viz.* a Fine, Subtil, Airy, Pleasant Nothing, or that had no Solidity in it: For the *Epicurean* Happiness, with all its Refinements, was rather a matter of Speculation than Practice; and

and after all was not worth so much Pains about it, but like the Gourd, which after its paring, and cleansing, and dressing, is fit only to be cast upon the Dunghill.

But it cannot be said that the Happiness offered to Christians is of such a Nature: For it is really the best, the most valuable and desirable Good, not promised to be enjoyed in this mean, despicable, and uncertain State of Life, but reserved for a more free, spiritual and continuing State. So our Apostle calls it, *an Inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you.* 1 Pet. 1. 4. Such is the Condition of the World without us here, and of the Passions and Infirmities within us, that it is a vain thing to expect a true Happiness to be enjoyed in this Life; the utmost we can hope for, is to be prepared for a better; and God knows there is difficulty enough in that. We have Hearts so vain and sensual, so addicted to the Pleasures and Impertinencies of this World, so prepossessed with the Objects of Sense, that it is no easie matter to bring them so much as in earnest to consider of another World. But it is yet harder to fix the Thoughts of it upon our Minds, so as to make a deep Impression upon them, as they must do, if we make the Happiness of Heaven our chief end and design. Supposing that Paradise were still upon Earth in its first Glory, and to be found by the Description which *Moses* gives of it; a Man may think often concerning it, where it lies, what the Rivers are by which it is to be discovered; but all this amounts but to a mere Speculation: But suppose that he takes up a resolution to go thither, what other kind of thoughts hath he then about it, as to the Truth and Certainty of the Place, and the Way that leads thither, and the Difficulties he is like to meet with? Which make another kind of Impression than the former dry Speculation did. If a Man doth not think Heaven worth all the Pains and Difficulties which lie in our way to it, he never yet had one serious and becoming thought concerning it. For the Happiness proposed is really so great and invaluable, that the more we think of it, the more we shall esteem it, and the more we shall despise and triumph over the greatest Difficulties in order to it; it being no less than the perfect Enjoyment of the most perfect Good, in a most perfect State of Life, and nothing can be desired by humane Nature greater than this.

(2.) The Difficulties in our Way to Salvation are not such, but we may reasonably hope to overcome them; *i. e.* if we set our selves about it; otherwise a very mean Difficulty will appear too great for us. Therefore we must suppose not only a willing Mind, but a firm Resolution to do what lies in us. And there are two things to shew that we may hope to overcome them.

(1.) That the most difficult Duties are in themselves reasonable to be performed by us.

(2.) That God offers his gracious Assistance for the performance of them.

(1.) That the most difficult Duties are in themselves reasonable. I mean such whose Difficulty doth not arise from accidental outward Circumstances; but from a Respect to the present State and Condition of humane Nature. Such as,

(1.) *True Repentance*; which is one of the hardest Works of a Man's life, when he hath been long engaged in a course of sinning against Conscience. It is not hard for such a one to be made sensible that he hath done amiss; for he that acts against his Judgment is, as *Aristotle*

ὁ ὁ ἀναγ-  
 γνῶντες  
 ἀντι-  
 πᾶς. Ni-  
 com. l. 7.  
 c. 8.  
 Inter cetera  
 mala, hoc quoque  
 habet subtil-  
 itia pro-  
 prium, sem-  
 per incipit  
 vivere.  
 Sen. Ep. 13.
 observes, *apt to repent*, i. e. to find fault with himself for his own Actions, and to resolve to amend. There is a sort of Displeasure against Sin, which is consistent with the Practice of it, which is called by the Casuists, *Attritio Impœnitentium*; but they say it is without a Purpose of forsaking it, if there be such a Purpose that they say is *Attritio Pœnitentium*; but if it be an ineffectual Purpose, the Scripture no where calls it *Repentance*. For as long as the habitual Practice continues, it is certain that Man's love to his Sin exceeds his Hatred of it; and what Repentance can that be which is consistent with a prevailing Love of Sin? When Persons were first made Christians, their Repentance was easily discerned, whether true or false, because it was a publick and solemn Renunciation of all their former Sins; but when Men have accustomed themselves to sin under a Profession to renounce their Sins, it is a harder matter to find out the Sincerity of their Repentance as to those Sins. And here a difference must be made as to the Nature and Kind of Sins: For there are some Sins which all agree to be Sins, yet it is a hard matter to convince Persons that they are guilty of them, such as *Hypocrisie*, *Schism*, and *Idolatry*, which Men will find something to excuse themselves from, notwithstanding the clearest Evidence against them. Some are such Strangers to themselves, that they do not suspect themselves for those Sins which others easily discern in them, as is common in the Case of *Pride*, and *Envy*, and *Covetousness*, and *Superstition*. It cannot be supposed that Persons should so particularly repent of such Sins which they are not sensible of; but where self-love blinds it cannot excuse. And where such evil Habits prevail, Persons must repent; and search, and examine themselves in order to a particular Repentance. There are other Sins which are really perpetual Burthens to a good Mind, but it knows not how to get rid of them with the utmost Care; such as inward Motions to Sin, sudden Heats and Surprises, mixt Infirmities, Coldness in Devotion, Distractions in Prayer, and many Omissions of Personal Duties; in such Cases as these, if we do not allow Sincerity of Repentance without thorough Amendment, we make a general Repentance insignificant, and make the Condition of many good Men desperate; for none can be saved without true Repentance. And if there can be no true Repentance without actual forsaking all such Kinds of Sins, there is no such thing as true Repentance to be found. But there are other Sins of a more dangerous and malignant Nature, which argue a very bad Mind; such as *Malice* and *Hatred*, a *rooted Aversion to what is Good*; and a *strong Inclination to Evil*. There are some Sins that are gross and notorious, of which *St. Paul* saith, *The lusts of the Flesh are manifest*; i. e. such Sins are easily known to be Sins, and Men's Consciences condemn them even while they commit them; such as *Murther*, *Adultery*, *Intemperance*, *Injustice*, *Perjury*, and such like. Of which the Apostle after declares, *That they who do*

Gal. 5. 19.  
 20, 21.  
 1 Cor. 6.  
 9, 10.  
 Eph. 5. 5, 6.
*such things shall never come to Heaven*. Therefore as to them, such a Repentance is necessary as implies not merely a dislike and sorrow for them, but a thorough Change of a Man's Mind, and the Course of his Life, with respect to them. And surely it is no easie matter to new mold the Temper of ones Mind, and to turn the Tide of our Actions; to break off our beloved Sins, and to bring forth Fruits worthy of Repentance. This is indeed a hard Work; but yet it is a most reasonable Work. It is hard, but it is like the taking violent Physick in some Diseases, where the Humour must be purged out, or the Party must die; the Uneasiness



ness is not to be considered, but the Necessity; and in such a Case the Mind cannot be at ease till it be done. So that the very Difficulty of Repentance lays the Foundation for greater Peace of Mind afterwards. And who will think much of such a Difficulty, which is so necessary to Peace with God and his own Conscience?

(2.) *The love of God above all things.* This is so fundamental a Duty, that we cannot place our Happiness in God without it. For if we do not love God above all things, we must love somewhat else so; and whatever we love above all things, that we make our Happiness. But I am afraid the greatest part of the World love all things above Him: For we are to judge of Men's love and esteem by what they court, and pursue, and desire, and delight in; it is impossible there should be such a Love of God, where the Stream of the Affections and Course of Actions run quite another way; I mean, to the Vanities of this World, of which the Apostle hath said, *If any Man loves it, the love of the Father is not in him.* 1 Joh. 2:15 But this is a hard Point: For some degree of love to this World is allowable; else how can we thank God for the Comforts of it? And all persons who know God do grant, that his Perfections are far above all the World, and therefore they seem to have a Value and Esteem for him above it. We must here distinguish a notional Esteem from that which is practical. A notional Esteem implies no more than a mere Conviction that God must exceed all the Excellencies which are scattered in the Creatures; but a practical Esteem is, when the Acts of our Souls towards him are suitable to the Apprehensions we have in our Minds concerning him. When we adore his infinite Perfections, and delight in the Meditation of them; when we desire to do all things pleasing to him, and avoid what we know to offend him; when we believe, and hope, and trust in him, and commit our selves to his Conduct in this World, in hopes of being happy with him in another. This is the Love of God above all things; but alas! Where is this Love of God to be found? It is no very hard matter to work up a heated and devout Imagination to the Fancy of Raptures and Ecstasies and Mystical Unions; but after all, *This is the love of God, that we keep his Commandments.* 1 Joh. 5:3 As the true Love of a Prince is not to flatter and admire him, and watch for his Smiles; but to observe his Directions, and obey his Orders, and to do what is most for his Service. And although such a Love of God be hard to those whose Hearts are full of Carnal Affections, and are taken up with the Follies and Vanities of this World, yet we cannot take one true step in the way to Heaven without the Love of God. For even those who have most corrupted the Doctrine of Repentance do confess, that there can be no true Contrition for Sin, which is not founded on the Love of God as the Principle of it, and however they have dangerously flattered and deceived those who are so weak to believe them, that Attrition with the Sacrament of Penance is sufficient to put Men into the State of Grace; yet St. Peter's Keys must have an extraordinary Virtue, if they can change Nature into Grace, or Fear into Love, or mere Horrour of Conscience into true Repentance.

But although such a Love of God above all things be so hard a thing to Minds prepossessed with the Love of other things; yet no one can deny that it is the most reasonable Duty in the World. The very thoughts of God, if they are such as we ought to have, imply, that he is the best, the wisest, the most perfect Being, and therefore the

most amiable and desirable Object. And whither then should the most Natural Stream of our Affections run, but towards him? What do we mean to suffer so much Earth and Filthiness to obstruct the free Passage of them in their most proper Course? What can we meet with in this deceitfull World, that can bear the least proportion to such infinite Goodness? Oh what a difference is there between our Reason and our Love? We verily believe that God deserves our Love above all things; and yet how small a share hath he in it? We love what we profess to despise above all things, *viz.* our Sins and this vain World; and we really too much despise what we still profess to love above all things, *viz.* God and our Eternal Happiness. O miserable Condition of Humanity! Made to be happy, and yet fond of Misery; loving what's vain, and yet despising Vanity; hating what's good, and yet accounts it best; and therefore fittest for our Choice and Love. The Love of God above all things is so just and reasonable, that those who do it least approve it as the most excellent Employment of our Minds; and those that do it most, think they fall short of what God deserves from them. The more we know of God, the more we know that we ought to love and delight in him; and all our Difficulty in the Practice of it can never make us think it is unreasonable to love him above all things, without whom nothing can make us happy, and who alone can do it.

(3.) *Universal Holiness of Heart and Life.* If this were not necessary to Salvation, our Apostle would not have pressed it with so much earnestness as he doth; *As obedient Children, not fashioning your selves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of Conversation; because it is written, be ye holy, for I am holy.* Again, *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as Strangers and Pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the Soul.* And again, *That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of Men, but to the will of God.* This is a hard saying to Mankind, who part with nothing so hardly as with their Sins; yet these must be parted with, if ever we hope to get to Heaven. I do not say, that a Perfection in Holiness is required, (for that were to suppose Happiness in this World, since there can be no perfect Holiness without it,) but there must be a constant, uniform, and sincere Endeavour after it; by avoiding all known and wilfull Sins, and doing all our Duties to God in such a Manner as our Conscience cannot charge us with gross Neglect or Insincerity. There are some things we cannot say are down-right Sins; yet if they lead to them; if they indispose our Minds to God, and his Service; if they tend to Lightness and Vanity, and make us more easie to entertain the Devil's Temptations, we ought to avoid them as the Snares of the Devil. So, on the other side, there are some things which we cannot say are plain, and expresse, and necessary Duties of Religion, yet they tend so much to keep up the Life and Spirit of it, that a general Design of Holiness is enough to recommend them. As to positive Duties of Religion, we cannot exactly fix the Time, and Measure, and Season of their Performance, which must vary according to Circumstances; but this we can say, that the more Persons set themselves to the Practice of Holiness, and the greater Preparation they make for another World, the more they will delight in the Performance of God's Service, and the more ready to embrace any Opportunities for it. Those who would have all Religious Duties determined as to the Circumstances of them, are like Men who would have punctual Rule set down,

how

how often two Friends should converse with each other, and how long time they are to stay together. True Friendship will need none of those things, but will incline them to embrace the best Opportunities for mutual Conversation; lest too long distance beget a Coldness first, and then the Friendship dissolves. It is no hard matter to pray as far as words go; but to pray with Zeal and Devotion, to attend upon God with that seriousness of Mind we ought to do, will require our utmost Attention. And it is no easie matter to keep our Minds composed and fit to converse with God in Prayer, and other solemn Duties of Religion. But as hard as this appears to us, it is most fit and reasonable that we should do it: For what an unbecoming thing it is to worship God in a careless, trifling, perfunctory Manner; as though nothing less deserved the imploying the Vigour of our Minds about, than the Service of God. But how can we love him with all our Hearts, if we do not serve him with all our Minds and Strength.

(4.) *Resignation of our selves to God.* This the Apostle calls *casting all our Care upon him.* This is a very wise Duty if we can attain to it, because it eases our Minds of many Fears and Perplexities, both as to our selves and others: But it is no easie thing to set our Minds free from solicitous thoughts, about possible Evils. We cannot mend our Condition, nor prevent what is determined by our most anxious Care; but we may enjoy our selves with far greater Peace and Tranquility, if we can be content to commit our selves to the best Conduct, and that is of him that governs the World. And whatever strugglings we may find within our selves about it, yet the more we search, and weigh, and consider things, the more we shall be satisfied, that the Resignation of our selves to God, as to all our Concernments in this World, is the best means to calm our Passions, and to abate our Fears, to prevent our Impatience, and so to attain to that *Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit, which is with God of great Price.*

But if all these Duties be so necessary to our being saved, and we lie under such Difficulties as to the Performance of them, their appearing to be reasonable makes our Condition so much worse: For to find it so hard to do what we are convinced is most reasonable to be done, is one of the worst Circumstances of our Condition. It's true we do not want Faculties of Understanding and Will; but what then, if our Moral Indispositions make these useles to our Spiritual Advantage? A Man that is like to be stifled in a large Vessel full of Downy Feathers, cannot complain of the hardness of what he lies upon, for all things feel soft and easie about him, yet he may be stifled with them; our evil Habits, and corrupt Inclinations, have nothing that feels hard or troublesome to us; but if we cannot overcome them, they will certainly ruine and destroy us. There is therefore a Necessity of a higher Principle of Divine Grace to enable us to break through all these Difficulties. Which Grace is abundantly promised by the Gospel to those who seek it, that it comes at last to be our own fault, if we be not saved.

II. And this helps us to reconcile the Difficulty of Salvation, with the Easiness of the Terms of the Gospel: For that which is not only hard, but impossible to us, in our own strength, may, by the mighty Power of Divine Grace, become not only possible but easie to us: And with all those things are accounted easie which bring ease, and that is a light

Burthen which rids one of a far harder. And thus the Commands of Christ, however hard in themselves to us, yet being considered with the Grace of the Gospel, and the blessed Effect of inward Peace, which follows sincere Obedience, even *his Yoke*, which keeps us most in, may be said to be *easie*, and *his Burthen*, which fits hardest upon us, may be said to be *light*.

III. And from hence we see what Encouragement there is still for us to hope to be saved, if we be *Righteous*.

There is none for the *Ungodly and Sinner*; i.e. for the profane Contemner of God and Religion, or for the wicked Liver. For however they may flatter themselves with vain and presumptuous hopes, there is no more ground to think that the *Righteous shall be saved*, than that the *Ungodly and Sinner shall not*: For both are alike made known by the same Word of God.

“ But what Comfort is it (may some say) to hear that the *Righteous are scarcely saved*, when we are so conscious to our selves of our own Unrighteousness? If we could think our selves *righteous* before God, there were some hopes, but we are Sinners, and if we should deny or excuse it, we should be so much more so; what hope can there be then for us?

To this I shall answer and conclude.

(1.) The *Righteous* here spoken of were once great Sinners; for 1 Pet. 1. 14. St. Peter mentions *their former lusts, and working the Will of the Gentiles in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of Wine, Revellings, Banquetings, and abominable Idolatries*. Yet these are said, *to be redeemed from their vain* 1. 18, 19. *Conversation by the precious Blood of Christ; and to be begotten again to a lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, &c.* 1. 3, 4.

There is therefore, not meerly a Possibility of being saved, but a just and grounded Hope, if we renounce our former Sins, and become righteous, according to the Terms of the Gospel; i. e. If we sincerely repent of our Sins, and turn from them, and live the rest of our time, not to the Lusts of Men, but to the Will of God. But if God had declared, that he expected from Mankind an entire and perfect Righteousness without any Sin, it were all one, as to publish a general and irreversible Decree of Damnation to all, 4. 2. *for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*. From whence the Apostle well argues, that Men cannot save themselves: But God of his infinite Pity and Mercy towards the deplorable Condition of Mankind, hath found out a way to save them, Rom. 3. 23. *by the Redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom he hath made a propitiation for their sins*. Although therefore as to our selves we have no hopes, yet herein God hath magnified his abundant Love towards Sinners, that although they have sinned to a high Degree, yet if they be so far wearied with the Burthen of their Sins, as to take Christ's Yoke upon them, then he hath promised Ease and Rest to their Souls, which is the greatest Blessing in the World, especially to repenting Sinners.

“ But (some may again say) we have repented and sinned, and sinned and repented again, and can hardly yet tell which will get the better at last; we cannot say that we have entirely submitted our Necks to Christ's Yoke, for that requires a great deal more than we can perform; how then can we be thought Righteous?

I answer therefore,

(2.) Where

(2.) Where there is a sincere and honest Endeavour to please God, and keep his Commandments, although Persons fail in the Manner of doing it, God will accept of such as righteous: But where they please themselves in their Unrighteousness, and go on in it, hoping that God will accept some kind of Repentance instead of it; or, where there hath been long struggling, and many Acts of Repentance, and the Interest of Sin prevails; the Case of such is very dangerous, but not desperate. For as long as there is hopes of a true Repentance, there is of Salvation; and there is still hopes of Repentance where Men's hearts are not hardned by an incorrigible Stiffness: For, according to the best Measures we can take by the Rules of the Gospel, none are effectually excluded from the Hopes of Salvation, but such as exclude themselves by their own Impenitency.

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# SERMON XXVI.

Preached before the

## King and Queen

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## WHITE-HALL,

March 23. 16<sup>89</sup>/<sub>90</sub>.

ECCLES. XI. 9.

*Rejoyce, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart  
cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in  
the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine  
eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God  
will bring thee into judgment.*

**I**F Solomon had said, *Rejoyce not, O young Man in thy youth, neither let  
thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; walk not in the way of thine  
heart, nor in the sight of thine eyes; for know thou, that for all these things  
God will bring thee into judgment,* The Sense had been so easie and plain,  
that there had been no Appearance of Difficulty in reconciling one part  
with the other: For the whole had been look'd upon but as a necessary and  
seasonable Admonition to such who by the Heats of Youth, and Strength  
of Inclination, and Allurements of the World, are too apt to be tran-  
spported with the Love of sensual Pleasures. And this had been very  
becoming the wise Man towards the Conclusion of his Book, wherein  
he had not only before set forth the several Vanities of humane Life;  
Ch. 12. 1. but so soon after, bids Men *Remember their Creatour in the days of their  
Youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh of which they  
shall say they have no pleasure in them,* i. e. in the days wherein they are  
most apt to walk in the way of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes.  
For he knew very well, that nothing is so powerfull a Check and Re-  
straint upon Men's Inclinations to Sin, as the serious Consideration of  
that God that gave them their Beings, and will bring them to an Ac-  
count for their Actions.

But

But how then comes he in this Verse to seem rather to give a Permission to young Men in the time of Youth to indulge themselves in their Mirth and Vanity? *Rejoyce, O young Man in thy Youth, &c.*

Some think that the wise Man only derides and exposes them for their Folly in so doing; but that seems not agreeable with the grave and serious Advice which follows. And we find nothing like *Irony* or *Sarcasm* in any part of the foregoing Book; for he begins it with a Tragical Exclamation against the Vanities of humane Life; *Vanity of Vanities, saith the Preacher, Vanity of Vanities: all is Vanity.* And he pursues his Argument by a particular Induction of the most tempting and pleasing Vanities of Life; and particularly all sorts of sensual Delights; as *Mirth* and *Jollity* in the first Place, then *Wine* and *Musick*, *fine Palaces*, curious *Vineyards*, *Gardens* and *Pools*, a great Retinue, and, which was needful to maintain all this, *Abundance of Silver and Gold.* But what a melancholy Reflection doth he make on all these Pleasures of Life? *Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit.* What encouragement then could the wise Man, after so much Experience of the World, give to young Men here in the Text, to *rejoyce in the days of their Youth, and to walk in the way of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes?* i. e. to pursue *Vanity*, and to lay the Foundation for greater *Vexation of Spirit*, when they come to reflect on their own Follies.

What then is the meaning of these words? For this, we are to observe, that the Preacher having declared his own main Scope and Design in the beginning and conclusion of his Book, brings in sometimes the different Senses which Mankind are apt to have concerning the Happiness of Life. And that is the reason that we meet with such different Expressions concerning it.

In one place it is said, that *there is no better thing under the Sun, than to eat and drink, and to be merry;* but in another, he saith, *Sorrow is better than laughter; and by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.*

In one Place he saith, *All things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked:* But in another, *That it shall be well with them that fear the Lord, but it shall not be well with the wicked.*

How can such Passages as these be reconciled, if we look on them as expressing the Sense of the same Person? But if we allow them to be the different Notions of two sorts of Men in this World, they are easie to be understood, although not to be reconciled. And the one sort is of those who place all Happiness in this Life, without regard to Religion or Vertue, or another World; and the other of those, who look on this Life only as a Passage to another; and that all Persons ought to behave themselves here, so as conduces most to their Happiness hereafter.

And according to these different Schemes, we have in the words of the Text two very different sorts of Counsel and Advice to young Men.

I. The first proceeds upon the Supposition that all the Happiness of Man lies in this Life, and in the Enjoyment of the sensual Pleasures of it; *Rejoyce, O young Man in thy Youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy Youth, and walk in the way of thy heart, and in the sight of thy eyes.* We have no other Rule here given but *the sight of the eye, and the way of the heart;* i. e. outward Appearance and inward Inclination;

and these are the beloved Rules of the most sensual and voluptuous Persons, and they judge of Happiness only by the pursuit of them. Here is nothing mention'd of *Reason or Conscience*, or a regard to Vertue in the Restraint of Natural Inclinations: Nay, here is nothing of that Severity which *Epicurus* himself thought necessary towards the maintaining of a pleasant State of Life; which he granted could never be done without some restraint of Men's Appetites and Inclinations to the Pleasures of Sense; and it is not to be imagined, that *Solomon* should give young Men greater Liberty than the corruptest Moralists did. Therefore I cannot look upon these words as a *Permission* for them to do what is here expressed; but as a full Description of that method of Living, which the jolly and voluptuous Corrupters of Youth would instruct them in, *Rejoyce, O young Man in thy Youth, and let thine heart cheer thee, &c.*

II. We have here the most powerfull check and restraint laid upon all these sensual Inclinations of Youth. *But know thou that for all these things God will bring thee to Judgment.* Which words are the wise Man's *Correction* of the foregoing *Liberty*, or the Curb which Reason and Religion give to the pursuit of Natural Inclinations, wherein every Word hath its force, and ought to make a deep Impression upon us.

For,  
 (1.) *Know thou*: Thine is not then the same case with Creatures that have no understanding; they are not capable of any Check from themselves, having no Law of Reason or Conscience within them to controul or govern their sensual Desires; but God hath given thee not meerly a brutal Appetite, but a rational Soul, capable of understanding the differences of Good and Evil, and the Reasons why some things which appear pleasant are very disagreeing to the Principles of humane Nature; *i. e.* to that Order, Decency, Modesty, and Regularity, which the more elevated Frame and Capacity of Mankind do require.

(2.) *For all these things*; as light and vain as you esteem them, as soon as they are over and forgotten by you, as secretly and closely as they are committed, as much as you endeavour to palliate and excuse them, yet but *for all these things God will certainly bring thee into Judgment.* Therefore you have all the Reason in the World to consider what you do, since *every thing will be brought to Judgment, whether it be good or evil*, as *Solomon* concludes this Book. Which shews the great regard God hath to the Good or Evil of our Actions; and if the great Judge of the World hath so, certainly we ought to have it, and never think our selves at liberty to do what we please, in gratifying our Lusts, and pursuing our Natural Inclinations to Evil.

(3.) *God will do it.* If there were no God to call thee to an Account, yet there are some Actions of Vertue so agreeable to Mankind, and some Vices so loathsome and deformed, that there would be sufficient cause for them to love the one and to abhor the other. If we could suppose such a Frame of things and such sorts of Beings as we now see, and no God to make them, (which is most absurd and unreasonable,) yet we must suppose these Beings to have Natures and Properties distinct from each other; so that we could not imagine Men to become Beasts, and therefore they must not act like them, but preserve that *Decorum* or Agreeableness in their Actions which is suitable to the peculiar Excellencies of humane Nature. And there are some Sins so much below the Dignity



Dignity thereof, that no Circumstances, no Suppositions, can make them fitting for Mankind to commit them; which shews that the Nature of Good and Evil is no Arbitrary thing, but is founded in the very Frame of our Beings, and in the Respects we owe to our selves and to one another. And since there is an Infinite and Supreme Being which hath absolute Power and Command over us, and gives us both our Beings and the Comforts of our Lives, it is most absurd to suppose it not to be a fault to hate his Goodness, or to despise his Mercy; or to slight his Power, and to contemn his Authority: For in all these there is something repugnant to the common Sense of Mankind, and to all Principles of true Honour and Justice. And there are such common Principles of Morality arising from our necessary Relation to God and each other, which are of so clear and convincing Evidence, that every one that considers them will grant that wicked Men may as well go about to dispute their Beings as their Sins; and may as easily prove that they are not, but only appear to be, as that no Actions are really evil, but only by false Glasses appear so to be. But however vain Men may deceive themselves, *God will not be mocked*; for he not only sees and knows all our Actions, but he will bring us to an Account for them.

(4.) *God will bring thee into Judgment.* It is a dreadful Consideration to a Sinner, that God knows all his false Steps, all his secret Sins, all his Falshood and Dissimulation with God and Men: And there is nothing which Men of Art and Design hate more, than to be discovered and found out in all their double and deceitful Dealings; but to have these not only privately discover'd, but expos'd and laid open to the view of the World; and not only so, but to have every Circumstance examin'd, and every Action scanned, and that by the great Judge of all the World, whom nothing can escape, nothing can deceive, nothing can withstand; whose Justice is inflexible, whose Knowledge is incomprehensible, whose Power is irresistible, and whose Vengeance is insupportable: This we cannot but imagine must strike an awe and terrour into the Minds of Men, when they are pursuing the Pleasures of Sin, that *for all these things God will bring them into Judgment.* But notwithstanding these and many other Expressions to the same purpose in Scripture, wherein God hath declared that he will certainly *Judge the World in Righteousness* at the Great Day; that *the Secrets of all hearts shall then be disclosed*; that *we must all appear before the Judgment seat of Christ*; and that *God will render to every Man according to his Deeds*: And notwithstanding it is a thing in it self very reasonable, from the Consideration of God's Justice and Providence, and the Nature and Consequences of good and evil Actions; yet the generality of Mankind go on as secure and careless as if there were no such thing, or that they ought not to be concerned about it. Therefore I shall not spend time in the Proof of that which I take for granted you all believe, and I am sure have Reason so to do; but I shall enquire into these things which are most practical, and therefore proper for our Consideration at this Time:

Acts 7. 31.  
Rom 2. 16.  
2 Cor. 5. 10.  
Rom. 2. 6.

(1.) How a Matter of so great Importance as a *Judgment to come* makes so little Impression on the Minds of the generality of Mankind, who profess to believe it.

(2.) By what means the Consideration of a future Judgment may have a greater Influence on all our Minds.

(1.) How a thing of so great Importance as *God's bringing us into Judgment* comes to make so little Impression on the Minds of the generality of those who profess to believe it, when we are so tender and sensible of small things with respect to this World.

For resolving this, we must consider, that there is a great Difference between the Not-disbelieving Doctrinal Points of Faith, and the practical Improvement of them in our Minds; without which they remain there but as general and confused Notions. Thus too many who abhor being thought Atheists, live as if there were no God; not that they deny or dispute his Being or Attributes, but they have no Regard to them in the last Dictates of their Minds, or in the Course of their Actions. To go about to prove such things to be true they look on as lost labour, for they do not question them; but there is another thing then which we are to give an Account of, *viz.* how it comes to pass that so great and so weighty Doctrines, being received and allowed to be true, make so little Impression on the Generality of Mankind; especially this of the Day of Judgment; of which these seem to be the main Reasons.

(1.) Men's Impatience of considering great and weighty things at a Distance, which cannot affect and move our Senses.

(2.) The bewitching and stupifying Nature of present and sensual Pleasures; which draw off the Mind from greater things, and weaken all the Impressions they make upon us.

(3.) A General Presumption upon God's Mercy towards Mankind on the Account of the Frailty of humane Nature, notwithstanding the severity of his Threatnings in Scripture.

(1.) I begin with *Men's Impatience of Considering.*

We flatter and please our selves with the thoughts that we are *Intelligent and Considering Beings*, when, it may be, *Considering* (especially as to Matters of greatest Consequence) is one of the things which Mankind have the greatest Aversion to. For generally, they love to go no farther than the Out-sides and Appearances of things, and have their Minds wholly possessed with false and flattering Imaginations, having neither Truth nor Consistency in them. And those who account themselves of better Breeding than others, are often more imposed upon than others in this way. The Pomp and Grandeur of the World, the Gaiety and Splendour of Living, strikes their Fancies with such vehement Impressions, that scarce any thing else gets into their Minds, or sinks deep into them. There are many other things that seem to stand fair in their Opinion at some times, but it is as they are thought serviceable to worldly Greatness and Honour.

This, after all the Instructions of Philosophers, the Declamations of Heathen and Christian Orators, and the far more powerfull Arguments of the wisest and best of Men, recorded in Holy Scripture, is still the great Idol of Mankind, which they serve and worship with the truest and warmest Devotion. All other things, how great and weighty soever in themselves, yet are really look'd on by them as a sort of Metaphysical Abstracted Notions of things invisible and immaterial, quite out of the reach of their Imagination, which may serve for the Amusement of some, and the Affrightment of others, and the Entertainment of Speculative Minds; but, how to raise themselves in the World, to appear Great, and have many Dependents; to pursue and carry on their own Interest (though without regard to Justice and Honesty) these

these they account Great and Noble things, and fit to employ their Minds upon. But alas! How much are such imposed upon by meer *Shews* and *Appearances* of things, which are really what God made them, but are not what we fanſie them to be! There are, no doubt, real Conveniencies of Life in Riches, and Honour, and Eaſe, and Plenty, or elſe they could never be eſteemed Bleſſings, nor could we have reaſon to thank God for them; but there is a great difference between the Fitneſs of things for our preſent *Uſe*, and for our *Happineſs*; i. e. when we make them our End, and do not employ them in order to a farther End. But it is good Advice of *St. Paul*, *Uſing the World as not abuſing it*; for the *Faſhon of this World paſſeth away*: it paſſes like a Ship under Sail, while the generality of Mankind, like Paſſengers, lie aſleep in it. Sometimes when Storms ariſe, or Waves croſs them, they ſeem to be awake, and to look about them; and to think whither they are going; but thoſe thoughts being uneaſie to them; they lie down again, and are carried they know not whither. But ſtill it is but the *Faſhon of this World*; a meer Landſkip, wherein there is great Variety but little Satisfaction, the *Shew* far out-doing the *Subſtance*. When the Devil ſhewed *Chriſt the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them*, the highest Mountain could afford but a ſmall Proſpect of them, but as ſome think he cauſed a Representation in the Air of the moſt tempting Splendour and Glories of them. And this was the trueſt Representation of them, by glorious Appearances and bewitching Shews. But unleſs there be ſomething in humane Nature which makes it very apt to be deceived by ſuch things, it were ſtrange the Devil ſhould think to prevail on our Saviour by them. We pity thoſe who travelling in the Night are deceived by *false Fires* and *ſhining Meteors*, and follow them into Bogs and Precipices; but the caſe of ſuch is ſo much worſe who are deluded by the deceitful Vanities of this World to their own Deſtruction.

And can there be any greater Argument of the want of Conſideration, than for Perſons to ſuffer themſelves to be ſo eaſily and ſo fatally cheated? It is a wiſe Obſervation of *Ariſtotle*, that *True Knowledge and Wiſdom lies moſt in ſettling and fixing the Mind*. For it is not the ſubtlety and fineneſs of Thoughts, nor the quickneſs and ſharpneſs of Apprehenſion, nor the cloſe and mathematical Deductions of Reason which make a wiſe Man, but the having a calm and compoſed Temper of Mind, the ſubduing our Paſſions, and governing our Actions with reſpect to our chief End. And in order to this, *Conſideration* is abſolutely neceſſary; without which that which is neareſt to us, and offers it ſelf firſt to our choice, muſt prevail upon us. And here lies the main Difficulty to perſwade Mankind to chooſe a far greater Happineſs at a Diſtance and inviſible, before a preſent Enjoyment of things we are conſtantly converſant with, and have made an early Impreſſion upon us. But ſtill we ſay, that it is nothing but *Men's Impatience of Conſidering*, which makes them have ſo little Regard to another Life. For if they would but lay both Worlds in the Balance one againſt the other, they would ſoon diſcover the wonderfull Folly of preferring that which this World accounts Happineſs before that which is offered to our Choice in another. For let us make all the fair and reaſonable Allowances that may be, as to our Inclinations, and Appetites, and Circumſtances in this World; as to the Diſtance, Obſcurity, Incomprehenſibleneſs of the Joys

1 Cor 7:31

Matth. 4:8

Τὸ γὰρ ἡγεῖ-  
ται καὶ  
σῆναι τὴν  
διάνοιαν,  
ἀπιστοῦσα  
καὶ φερεῖν  
λεπόμεθα.  
Nac Aufc.  
l. 7. c. 4.  
n. 15.

Joys of another World; yet every considering Man that regards true Happiness will be sure to chuse that which is to come. For,

(1.) Supposing the Happiness were Equal, yet there is no Proportion in the Continuance of them; and a considering Man will be sure to choose a Happiness that can never have an End, before one that may be irrecoverably lost in a Moment; and can certainly be enjoyed but for a little time, if there were any Certainty at all in the Enjoyment of it.

(2.) The more any have considered, the more they have repented placing too much of their Happiness here, because Reason and Experience shews them the Folly of it. But the more they have considered, the better satisfied the Minds of good Men are in placing their Happiness above; where alone that good is to be found which can make us truly happy, and is to be enjoyed in that Fulness, that Purity, that Certainty which makes it fit for the wisest and most considering Men to prefer above a present Happiness, if it were to be enjoyed on Earth.

(3.) He that looks after a future Happiness doth not thereby lose any of the real Conveniencies of humane Life; but he that places his Happiness here, cannot find it in this World, and is sure to be miserable in another: And this makes a very considerable Difference in the Choice. Indeed, if God made it absolutely necessary in order to future Happiness for us to forego all the natural Pleasures and innocent Delights of this Life, the Terms would be much harder, and hardly possible to humane Nature. For, if all Pleasures of Sense must be renounced, we must not see the pleasing Varieties of Nature, nor hear the melodious sound of Birds, nor taste the Meat when we are hungry, nor Drink when we are thirsty; for there is really greater Pleasure of Sense when Nature craves necessary Sustenance, than what the most voluptuous *Epicurean* enjoys in all his Contrivances, first to raise his Appetite, and then to please it: For what is most natural and necessary is the most delightful; every thing of *Force* must have something *Uneasie* in it. But God hath not dealt thus hardly with Mankind; he allows us all the reasonable Desires of Nature, and hath only forbid us what is unreasonable and unnecessary. And upon the forbearance of what is so, joyned with our entire dependence upon himself for it,

Gal. 5. 6. (which the Scripture calls *Faith working by Love*;) he hath made the gracious offer of Eternal Happiness. It is true, in extraordinary Cases of Persecution he requires more, but then he proposes extraordinary Rewards to make abundant Recompence for them; but in the common and ordinary Case of Mankind, he requires no more than our avoiding those Excesses in pleasing our Appetites which Nature and Reason condemn. And those who consider, cannot but see how unreasonable it is to place their Happiness in forbidden Pleasures; and to think that nothing can make them happy, but what God hath declared shall make them miserable. It is a strange Crossness in our Desires, if nothing can please them but what displeases God. It were no hard task to shew, that God forbids nothing but what is really repugnant to our Well-being here; and how then can any such thing as Happiness be hoped for in such things? And when a Man ventures being miserable for ever, for what can never make him happy here, if he had his full Liberty to pursue his Desires; he shews how far he is from acting like a wise, rational, considering Being. So that Impatience of considering is one great Reason why the thoughts of a Judgment to come, make so little Impression on Men's minds.

(2.) The

(2.) The second Reason is *the Bewitching and Stupifying Nature of sensual Pleasures.* The *Epicurean* Philosophers, who managed the *Theory* of Pleasure with the greatest Art, so as it might look like a proper happiness for Mankind, found two things absolutely necessary in order to it.

(1.) The Retrenching all inordinate Desires, *viz.* such as had more Pain following them, than there was Pleasure in the Enjoyment of them.

(2.) The removing the Fears of another World out of Men's minds. For as long as these sunk into their Minds, they must rob them of that inward Tranquillity, without which it were a vain thing so much as to talk of Happiness. But it was impossible, upon their Grounds, to do either of these. For,

(1.) It is unreasonable to suppose that the Happiness of our present Life should consist in the Enjoyment of Pleasure, and yet the Pleasure of Opinion to be taken away, since the *Pleasure of Opinion* is the far greatest part of the *Pleasure of Life*; and that which is as much valued and esteemed by all those who place their Happiness in Pleasure. If it were all to be reduced to that which lies in satisfying the necessary Desires of Nature, then such as have just enough for that, are far more happy than the Rich and Voluptuous, because they have less Pains and Care. But if any allowance be made to the *Pleasure of Fancy* and *Opinion*, then no stop can be given to inordinate Desires. For, who can set bounds to Fancy, or lay a reasonable Restraint upon Desires, if the Differences of Good and Evil be taken away? As they must be, if meer Pleasure and Pain be to be regarded in our Actions.

(2.) As to the other, the methods they used to remove all Fears of another World were weak and trifling, and they had no Advantage in point of *Argument*, but what the Ignorance and Folly of the Idolatrous part of Mankind at that time gave them. But there is a far greater Advantage in point of *Interest*, which makes Men of sensual Lives very willing to be rid of the Fears of another Life. And a willing Mind goes a great way in believing or not believing. Those who place their Happiness in eating and drinking well (as they call it) and other sensual Delights, which can never be enjoyed when this Life is ended, have but a melancholy Prospect into another World; for they are shut out from the very Possibility of being happy in their own Sense, (unless they would believe the Eastern Impostour;) but when they once come to apprehend that there is no Pleasure to make them happy but what is seated in the Body, they are apt to conclude that when that dies, there is an end of all, for their Imaginations can reach no farther. And the true Reason is, they have laid Reason and Conscience asleep so long, that it is very hard to awaken them; their Notions of Good and Evil are like the confused Apprehensions of Men half awake; they see enough to perplex but not enough to satisfy them. And when their Fears grow upon them, they have not the Heart and Courage to examine them, whether they be reasonable or not; but rather chuse to return to their former *Opiates*, than undergo the trouble of an effectual Cure by a hearty Repentance and *coming to themselves*, as Luk 15:17. the Prodigal Son in the Parable did, when his Hardship had brought him to Consideration. We do not know what had become of him, if he had been wise and frugal in his Pleasures; if he had taken care of a good Stock and a plentiful Subistence; but he first came to be pinched with want, before he was awakened to repent. But we have in Scrip-  
ture

ture a more remarkable Instance of the stupifying Nature of sensual Pleasures; and that was in *David* after his Sins of Adultery and Murther. It is a wonder, how a Man of such a tender Conscience in other things, should continue so long under the guilt of these Enormities, without being awakened to Repentance: Did he not know these to be great Sins? And did not his Conscience charge him with the guilt of them? How came he then to need a Prophet to be sent to him, and to deal so plainly with him, as to tell him *Thou art the Man?* But <sup>1 Sam. 12. 7.</sup> this is a plain evidence, how much the Pleasures of Sin are apt to stupifie Men's Consciences so far, that unless God by his Grace be pleased to awaken them thoroughly, they never come to a sincere and hearty Repentance. *David* saw nothing more as to the guilt of his Sins, when he penn'd his 51st. *Psalms*, than his own Reason and Natural Conscience might inform him before; but he had quite another sense of his Sins then; his *Heart was broken* and his Soul *wounded* under the Apprehension of God's Displeasure; and this makes him pray so earnestly and so importunately to God for the Pardon of his Sins. And if it were thus in the case of a Man otherwise *after God's own heart*, i. e. afraid of offending him, and carefull to please him; what may we imagine it to be in those who in the time of Youth *walk in the way of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes*: i. e. allowing themselves in all sensual Inclinations, and pursuing carnal Delights so far till they have lost all sense of God and another World; and such as these, nothing but powerfull Influences of Divine Grace can awaken and recover.

(3.) The third Reason is, *A General Presumption upon God's Mercy.* The first thing which Sinners, in the heat of their Youth, and pursuit of their Lusts, aim at, is to think as little as may be of what they are doing or what will be the Consequence of their Actions. For every thought of themselves is very uneasy to them, and every thought of God is much more so; therefore they drive away all such Thoughts by one means or other, by Sleep, Diversion, Company, and such publick Entertainments, as rather heighten and inflame their Vices than correct them.

If all this will not do, but there will be some melancholy Hours, wherein Conscience begins to rouze it self, and to awaken the Sinner to some sense of his Folly; then he is ready to hearken with pleasure to any raileries against *Religion and Morality*; and admires the Wit of any one who dares say a bold and sharp thing against the Wisdom of all Ages, and of the best Men in them. And one or two such Sayings, without Proof, are cryed up as far beyond the best Rules of Morality, or the Evidence of natural and revealed Religion. Any Sceptical Disputes are sufficient Demonstrations to them; and the most unreasonable Cavils against Religion are embraced, because against the thing they hate; and even a Jest against the Day of Judgment shall signifie more with them, than the strongest Arguments in the World to prove it. The true Reason is, they love their Vices, and hate every thing which makes them uneasy to them; and nothing doth more so, than the thoughts of a Judgment to come.

But suppose after all, the terrible and frequent Expressions of Scripture concerning the Day of Judgment, joyned with the Reasonableness of the thing, do make such Impression on their Minds that they cannot wholly shake off the Fears and Apprehensions of it, then their last Endeavour is to mitigate and lessen them, from a *General Presumption of God's*

God's Mercifull Nature; and therefore they are willing to suppose, that however God to keep the World in awe, hath threatned them with the dreadful Severities of the Great Day, yet as a tender Father who threatens his disobedient Son, in order to reclaim him, with no less than disinheriting him for ever; yet when it comes to Execution he may relent, not from his Son's Deserts, but his own Compassion; so they hope, or believe, (or are willing to do so) that God at the Great Day will not proceed according to the Rigour which he hath threatned to use. And to comfort themselves in these hopes they find out all possible Extenuations of their Sins: " If we, say they, had been " created purely intellectual Beings, free from this load of Flesh, and " the Inclinations which are natural to it, then it had been more rea- " sonable to have called us to a strict Account for every Action of our " Lives; for then every Inclination to Evil must have come from our " Minds; but now our Bodies corrupt and draw them aside; and the " Inclinations to Evil grow faster than our Reason, which should " check and restrain them. And when those Inclinations are strongest, " Men have not that Judgment which is necessary to the Government " of unruly Passions. So that the very Frame of humane Nature seems " to plead for Sins committed in the Heat and Violence of Youth. Be- " sides, such is the Strictness and Purity of the Law of God, and so " great the Weakness and Disability, the Ignorance and Inadvertency " of Mankind, that if God will make no Allowance for humane Frail- " ty, who can stand before his Tribunal? And, if any Allowance be " made for Sins of Infirmity, there are so many Abatements to be made " for Sins committed through sudden Passion, through Mistake; through " the unavoidable Impotency of humane Nature in this degenerate " Condition, that the Severity of that Day is not much to be feared.

This is the utmost of the Sinners Plea against the Severity of the Day of Judgment: But, to shew how faulty it is, I shall offer these Considerations.

1. That God will certainly *Judge the World in Righteousness*; and Act. 17 31. therefore none shall have Cause to complain of the Harshness or Severity of his proceedings. For, this *Righteousness* is not the Rigour of Justice, but that Equity which hath a Regard to the Circumstances of Actions, and the Abatement and Extenuation of Faults which arise from them.

2. None shall suffer at that Day, but for their wilfull Impenitency, and obstinate continuance in Sin. For, this is not only agreeable to the Mercifull Nature of God, to forgive repenting Sinners; but it is one of the great Designs of the Gospel, to assure Mankind of it by the highest Testimonies, even by the Death and Resurrection of the Son of God, and all the Miracles wrought in Confirmation of it, and of the Truth of his Doctrine.

3. There are several Degrees of Wilfulness and Obstinacy, and Men's Judgments shall be according to them. Some Men's Capacities, Opportunities and Helps have very much exceeded others; some have broken through stronger Convictions and more powerfull Assistances of Grace than others; some have had more early Instructions, more frequent Warnings, more obliging Favours from Heaven than others. And as it is reasonable that Persons suffer for their obstinate continuance in Sin, so that they should suffer according to the Degrees and Circumstances of it.

4. It is no unjust Severity in God, to deprive Men of that Happiness which they have wilfully refused; and to condemn them to that Misery which their Sins have deserved. Hath not God made the most condescending Offer of Mercy and Salvation, that it is possible for Creatures to expect from him, after so many and great Provocations? Could Heaven stoop lower than it hath done to vile and ungratefull Sinners? When the Son of God came down from Heaven on purpose to reconcile God and Man together; When the Spirit of God warns and excites their Minds to the Consideration of their Eternal Welfare; When *the Messengers of this Reconciliation are to woo and intreat and beseech Sinners in Christ's stead, as though God did beseech them by them, that they would be reconciled to God*; When the *Patience and Goodness and Long-suffering of God* is exercised so much on purpose to lead them to Repentance; When God instead of perfect Obedience, is willing to pardon and pass by so many Offences, if they truly repent of them, and to receive them still into his Favour and Mercy; When after all this Men do rather prefer the present Pleasures of Sin, before all that Happiness which God so freely offers, is it any Injustice in him to suffer them for ever to be deprived of that which they so wilfully, so ungratefully, so obstinately refused? And supposing the Souls of Men to subsist in another World free from all those Clouds of Errour and Mistake, and the false Notions they are deceived by here, as well as all the Diversions and Pleasures of this Life: It is not to be imagined, but they must for ever suffer an intolerable Anguish within (called, *A Worm that never dies, and a Fire that never goes out,*) from the Reflexions upon their own Folly. What Vengeance beyond this God may inflict, we now know not, (may none of us ever know it!) but we are sure it will never exceed the Proportion and Desert of their Sins. Which is sufficient to clear the Justice of God in his Proceedings with Mankind in the Day of Judgment.

Mar. 9. 44.

2. It remains now only to shew by what means God's bringing us to Judgment may make a deeper Impression upon our Minds; By considering these two things:

1. That our not considering it will not make our Condition better, but much worse:

2. That our Considering it is the best means to prevent the evil Consequences of it.

(1.) Our not considering it will not make our Condition better. There were great Reason indeed *to walk in the way of our hearts, and in the sight of our eyes*; and never trouble our selves with what will happen at the great Day, if the putting it out of our Heads would make our Accounts the easier when it comes. But alas! Whether we think of it or no, the Account runs on, and we must answer to every particular at last; and how unprovided shall we be, if we spend no time here in examining, stating and clearing of them as far as we are able. It is a mighty Privilege we have by the Gospel, that God allows us to clear our Accounts with him in this World; *For, if we would judge our selves we shall not be judged.* If we call our selves to a strict Account for our Actions; if we repent heartily and sincerely of our Sins; if we seek earnestly to God for Mercy; if we have *our Consciences cleansed by the Blood of Christ* from the Pollution of our Sins, then we may with Joy and Peace in our Minds think of the Great Day of Recompence. But if we never enter into our selves, to search and examine our own Actions,

1 Cor. 11.  
31.

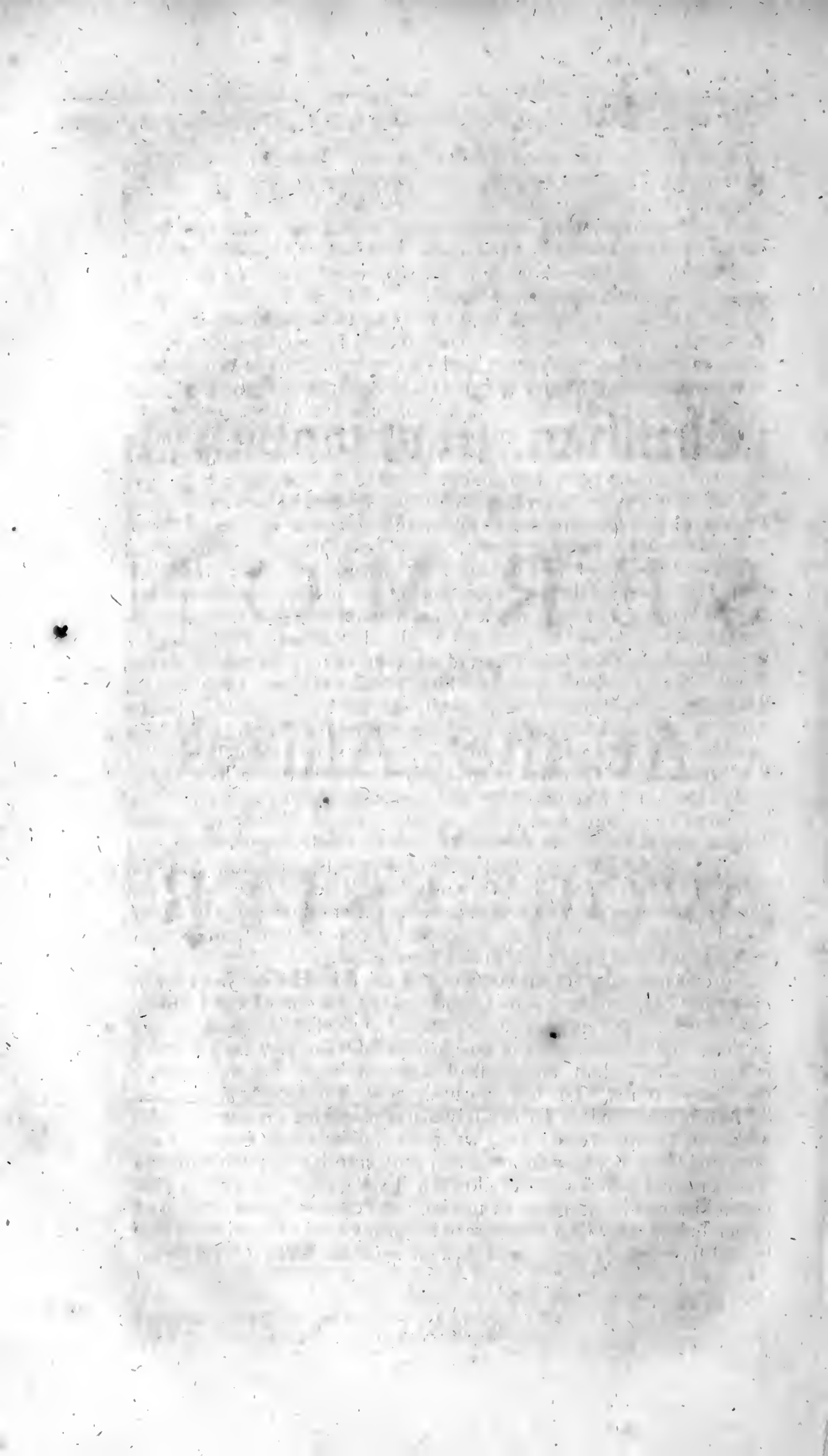
ons.



ons, never look into the Habits of our own Minds, nor charge our selves with the guilt of the Sins we have committed, how can we ever hope to escape the Scrutiny or avoid the Severity of that Day? For our Account continually increases by our neglect of it, and the Burthen of God's Wrath must be so much heavier when we have taken no care to lessen it, but *after our hardness and impenitent hearts have only treasured up wrath against the day of wrath.* Rom. 2. 5.

(2.) Our considering that God will bring us to Judgment is the best means to prevent the evil consequences of it. For, although we cannot hope to plead Innocency; yet, (which is next in Point of Wisdom) this is the most effectual Motive to bring us to Repentance: And that which makes us repent makes us to grow wise in time, and to lay a good *Foundation for Eternal Life*. There are many Arguments to induce us to it in the Folly and Shame of our Sins; the Wisdom of Reflection and Reformation; the Instances of it, and Exhortations to it recorded in Scripture; but there is none more sensible and which touches Men more in Point of Interest and Concernment than this of a *Judgment to come*. "Must I then, saith a penitent Sinner, give a strict Account to God of all the evil Actions of my Life, and suffer according to the desert of them if I die in Impenitency? How much doth it then concern me to repent betimes, to repent in good earnest, to repent while there is hopes of Mercy! Away then all ye deceitfull Vanities of this wicked world, ye have too long deceived and seduced me: What will all this vain shew, this busie Seducer, this impertinent Outside of the World signifie, when I must be stript of all, and stand guilty and accused by my own Conscience before the Judgment-Seat of Christ? Oh! how wretched shall I be, if my Conscience condemns me before the Sentence of the Judge! Therefore, I am resolved to prevent the Judgment of that Day; I will accuse, judge, and condemn my self; nay, I will proceed to Execution, as to all the vitious Habits and corrupt Inclinations within me. And although I cannot wholly *mortifie* them, yet I will *crucifie* them; *i. e.* nail them to the Cross, and allow them no longer Liberty; and albeit they may struggle for a time, yet I will never give way to their Dominion over me any more; that so Death and Judgment may find me prepared, if not with unspotted Innocency, yet with hearty and sincere Repentance.

To conclude all; let the consideration of this *Day of Judgment to come* enter deep into our Minds, and awaken us out of our Lethargy and Security. We are very apt to put off unpleasing things from time to time, and to pass away our time here as easily as may be. But this is no part of Wisdom, and we shall extremely blame our selves for it one time or other. The best we can do now, is to recover what is past by Repentance, and to set our selves to the making up our Accounts with God in this World: For, we are all walking on the brink of Eternity, and know not how soon we may drop into it. But what Eternal Horror and Confusion must follow us, if we go on to slight the Opportunities he still affords us of making our Peace with him who is to be our Judge? May God therefore of his mercy awaken us all to a timely and serious Repentance, and then *our Iniquities shall not be our Ruine*.



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Christian Magnanimity:

I N A

S E R M O N

Preached

At the Assizes

A T

WORCESTER,

*September 21. 1690.*

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To my Honoured Friends,  
**ROBERT BERKELY, Esq;**  
High-Sheriff of the County of *WORCESTER*,

A N D

**The Gentlemen of the Grand-Jury.**

Gentlemen,

**I**T is at Your Request, that I Publish this Sermon, which You were Pleased to think might be Useful to others, as well as to those who heard it. And I could not deny the First Request that was made to me by the Gentlemen of this Country, in which I have found so much Civility and Kindness. I thank God, I came hither with no other Intention but to do as much Good as I could; and I hope I shall always pursue that Design with a sincere and vigorous Mind, as far as I have Health and Opportunity. I thought I could not do my Duty at this time, without Representing the Evil and Mischief of some very unseasonable Heats and Animosities, among those who pretend to the same Common Interest, as to Religion and Laws, which are the most certain Standard of our Publick Good; and none, but such as are Enemies to it, can understand it otherwise.

May God Almighty Bless this Country and the Whole Nation, with a hearty Zeal and Concernment for it.

I am,

*Worcester,*  
Sept. 23.  
1690.

Gentlemen,  
Your Faithful Servant  
for the best Ends,

**E. WIGORN.**

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# SERMON XXVII.

PREACHED

At the Affizes

A T

## WORCESTER,

September 21. 1690.

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2 TIM. I. 7.

*For God hath not given us the Spirit of Fear, but of Power, and of Love, and of a Sound Mind.*

**I**F we look into the Scope and Design of this Epistle, we shall find St. Paul at the time of writing it, under more than ordinary Apprehensions of the sad Condition of the Christian Church.

As to *Himself*, he had great Satisfaction in the particular Care of Divine Providence towards Him: For, God had not only formerly delivered him out of many Persecutions; but had lately rescued him out of the Mouth of the Lyon, i. e. from a great and imminent Danger. And though he foresaw, that the time of his Departure was at hand; yet that was so far from giving him any Trouble, that he had the Comfort of a good Conscience in looking back; *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*; and in looking forward, *Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the Righteous Judge shall give me at that Day.*

But all his Dissatisfaction did arise from looking about him; *For without were Fightings, and within were Fears.* The Persecutions abroad were indeed so sharp and severe, that none could keep a good Conscience without a share in them; which makes him say, *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer Persecutions.* But this was not that which troubled him most; for there were two things which seem to have made a deep and sad Impression upon his Mind.

(I.) He observed a great Coldness and Indifferency among some who pretended a mighty Zeal for the common Interest of their Religion before.

fore. Of this he gives a strange Instance in his own Case. *At my first*  
 Ch. 4. 16. *Answer, saith he, no man stood with me, but all men forsook me; I pray*  
*God it be not laid to their Charge.* They might think it Prudence and  
 Caution at such a dangerous time; but the Apostle certainly thought it  
 a fault, or else he would never have pray'd *that it might not be laid to*  
*their Charge.* Something might be said in Excuse of those who were  
 so near danger; but what can be said for the general Coldness of those  
 Ch. 1. 15. *at a Distance? This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned*  
*away from me.* A sad Consideration to *Timothy*, who was entrusted by  
 him with the particular Care of those in *Asia!* For, what Comfort  
 could he hope for among them, who were turned away from *St. Paul?*  
 Such a Defection as this must needs bring great dishonour to Religion,  
 as well as dissatisfaction to him.

(2.) He observed a busie sort of Seducers, who were crept in among  
 them; who were crafty, restless and designing Men; such as could not  
 compass their own ends without taking upon them a Pretence of Zeal  
 for Religion. They were Men of as ill Tempers as we can well imagine  
 Ch. 3. 1, Men to be; *They were lovers of themselves, covetous, boasters, proud, &c.*  
 2, 3, 4. But he concludes their Character with what one would have least ex-  
 pected from such a sort of Men, *that they had a Form of Godliness.* They  
 were such *painted Sepulchres* that made a more than ordinary Shew and  
 Appearance, but within there was nothing but Rottiness and Corruption.  
 Men who pretended to Religion without Vertue; and hoped to  
 be accounted *Godly* without any real Goodness. They made a great  
 Shew of Zeal about some things, and were industrious in gaining Pro-  
 felytes; for which end *they crept into Houses, &c.* But whatever they pre-  
 tended, their own Interest lay at bottom; *Supposing that gain is Godli-*  
 1 Tim 6. 5. *ness;* and they were so far from any hopes of Amendment, that *St. Paul*  
 2 Tim. 3. gives that dreadful Character of them, *that they waxed worse and worse,*  
 13. *deceiving and being deceived.*

And what now should *Timothy* do under such a Complication of ill  
 Circumstances? Should he only stand still and see which way things  
 would go? Or should he give way to Despondency and sink under the  
 Burthen of his Fears? No, *St. Paul*, altho' at a Distance, and a *Prisoner*,  
 yet thinks fit to rouse, to animate, to encourage him; and not only to  
 2 Tim 1. 6. *put him in Mind of the gift of God which was in him;* but of that Spirit  
 and Temper, which true *Christianity* possesses Men's minds with.

*For God hath not given us the Spirit of Fear, but of Power, of Love, and*  
*of a sound Mind.*

Which words may be considered two Ways:

I. with respect to *Difficulties* and *Troubles* in the World; and so it is  
 not a *Spirit of Fear, but of Power.* Some render it *Spiritum Timiditatis*,  
 a timorous, pusillanimous Spirit; which is apt to be dejected with Fears,  
 so as not to have Courage and Resolution enough to do ones Duty for  
 fear of Danger; and a *Spirit of Power* is that which supports and bears  
 up the Mind under a Prospect of Difficulties, so as not to be hindered  
 thereby from that Duty which lies upon us.

II. With respect to the *Humours* and *Passions* of Men; and so it is a  
*Spirit of Love and a sound Mind:* Not a peevish, froward, exasperating,  
 provoking Spirit, but a *Spirit of Love;* Not a turbulent, seditious, un-  
 ruly Spirit, but of a *sound Mind.*

I. With

I. With respect to *Difficulties* and *Troubles*. Which may be understood two Ways:

1. As it may relate to such as *St. Paul* and *Timothy*; *We have not received*, i. e. we that have an *Apostolical Spirit* given to us.

2. As it may relate to all Christians; *We that own Christ sincerely and truly have not received*, &c.

(1.) I shall consider the Words with respect to the *Apostolical Spirit*; because this day we commemorate one of them, (*St. Matthew*.)

Those who had the *Apostolical Office* committed to them, (whether *Primarily* by *Christ* himself, or *Secondarily* by the *Apostles*, as *Timothy* and *Titus* and others) had great need of this *Apostolical Spirit*. For, really, the *Difficulties* were so great, which they were to go through, that no ordinary Measures of *Courage* and *Resolution* would serve them. When men fight with *Enemies* in the open Field, there is a *Multitude* combined together; among whom there is abundance of *Noise* and *Heat* and *Examples*; and the *Hopes* of present *Victory*, and the *Shame* and *Danger* of running away; which animate Persons in a Day of *Battel*: But it is another kind of *Courage* which is required to make Men bear up against the *Malice* and *Subtilty* of the *Devil* and of wicked Men; for here the *Combination* is to all appearance much stronger on the worse Side; and if we are to judge of *Success* by *Numbers*, those who promote *Vertue* and *Goodness* could never bear up against their *Adversaries*; who were sure to carry it by the *Poll*.

There were among the *Heathens* some few great Men, who endeavour'd to reform the *Vices* of Mankind: But alas! What poor *Success* had they in their attempts this way? Although they wanted neither *Wit*, nor *Learning*, nor *Address* to carry on this *Noble Design*; such as *Socrates* at *Athens* and *Epictetus* at *Rome*, and some others, who lived agreeably to their *Doctrine*; yet how little *Effect* had both their *Precepts* and *Example* on the rest of the *People* either at *Athens* or *Rome*? *Socrates* declared a mighty *Resolution* rather to die than to say or do any thing unbecoming the *Station* God placed him in; and upon the *Prosecution* of two malicious Men, the prevailing Party were resolved to try the *Experiment*, and took him at his Word. After which, his *Disciples* durst not deal so plainly and openly as he had done; and the *Artifice* they were put to, lost the force of the best Part of their *Philosophy*; which they so mixed with *Numbers* and *Figures* and abstracted *Speculations*, that it became a *Mystery*, instead of a plain *Design* to reform the *Manners* of Men. The best and wisest of them seem to have taken more pains to satisfy themselves, than to have instructed others; or if they did, they were some few chosen *Disciples*, whom they initiated with as much *Care*, as they were wont to do in their solemn *Mysteries*.

But the *Apostles* undertook to reform the *World*, as to two things, which Mankind are the hardest brought off from, and those are *Idolatry* and *Vice*. And they went plainly and roundly to work, which Men can the least bear; as we see by the *Persecutions* they underwent almost in every Place as soon as their *Design* was understood. There was a general *Clamour* against them as the *Disturbers* of Mankind, as those who turned the *World upside down*; which in some sense was true, but not as they meant it with respect to *Order* and *Government*. But when Men have no mind to be reformed, they must have some *Terms* of *Reproach* to fasten upon those who go about to do it. It being natural for them

to put *Pictures* of *Devils* on those, whom they have a mind to execute. And when they endeavour'd to convince them of their Immoralities, they were impatient; of which we have a clear Instance in *St. Paul's* Preaching to *Felix concerning Righteousness and Temperance and Judgment to come*: which were excellent Subjects, but they went too near him; he was too much concerned, to be willing to hear any more of them. The Discourse of *St. Paul* had too much Force in it for him to bear it any longer; for it caus'd such a disorder in his Mind as affected his Body, for *Felix trembled*: And then he thought it best to dismiss him to a more convenient Season, which never came, that we read of. Which shews, how much more willing Men are to continue in their Faults, than to hear them reprov'd in order to Amendment. *Am I therefore become your Enemy, saith, St. Paul, because I tell you the Truth?* No doubt of it: For, no Truths can be so uneasy and provoking as those which gaul the Consciences of Men.

Act. 24. 25.  
Gal. 4. 16.

The false Teachers whom *St. Paul* complains so much of, were sensible of the Inconveniencies which follow'd plain Truth; and therefore, to avoid Persecution, they so much mixed and adulterated the Doctrine of the true Apostles, that it lost its main Force and Efficacy. And although by their shifts and compliances with *Jews* and *Gentiles*, they escap'd the hard Usage which others underwent; yet the Effect of it was, that their Doctrine took no deep rooting in the World; For, in *Origen's* time, a very inconsiderable Number of their Disciples were left. But though the plain Simplicity of the Gospel met with Persecutions on all hands; yet by the undaunted Courage of the Preachers of it, the more it was oppos'd the more it prevailed, and at last triumphed over its greatest Persecutors.

(2.) These words may be understood with respect to all Christians; and so they shew what the Temper and Spirit of Christianity is, where it hath its due and proper Effect upon men's minds.

The *Moralists* speak much of an excellent Vertue, which they call *Magnanimity*: which implies such a Greatness of Mind, that it carries a Man on in doing what becomes him, without being discouraged by the Fears of what may befall him in it.

And this our Saviour doth suppose to be so attainable by all his Disciples, that he requires it from them. *Fear not them which can kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul; or Be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do*, i. e. Govern your Fears by the Consideration of another World, and not of this. But is this possible, to be rid of our Fears as to this World? It may be some *Heroical* minds may attain to this; or those on whom God bestows the extraordinary Gifts of his Spirit: But can any by the common Measures and Assistances of Grace reach to it? Fear is a natural and violent Passion; which is not easily dissented, much less cured; and the weaker any are, as to Mind or Body, the more they are subject to the Power of it. There are some Constitutions by Reason of their dark and confused and melancholy Apprehensions of things, can never get out of the Labyrinth of their own Fears. And where Suspicions and Jealousies find an easie Entertainment, it is not possible to cure such Person's Fears; for they are afraid of all possible things. Such I must exclude as labouring under a Disease of Imagination, as we do those who are under a Fever; And for whose *Unreasonable Fears* I know no better Cure than there is of Madness, which is to bring the Persons to the Use of Reason

Matth. 10.  
28.  
Luk. 12. 5.



as well as we can; and if Reason doth not cure them, nothing else will.

But let us suppose the Fears reasonable, *i. e.* such as considering the State of the World a prudent Man may justly apprehend; is it not possible to master these Fears? Not to cure our Apprehension, when it is reasonable, but to take Care, that it do not torment and disquiet our Mind; but especially that it do not hinder us from doing our Duty:

And this is that Spirit of *Christian Magnanimity* which I design to speak of; and to make the Matter as clear as I can, I shall,

(1.) Enquire into those things which the *Nature* of *Magnanimity* requires in general.

(2.) Shew the particular Measures of it according to *Christianity*.

(3.) Consider the *Possibility* of attaining of it, and the Means in order to it.

(1.) As to *Magnanimity* in general; It is not so much any one Vertue; as a Result from several put together; and especially these.

(1.) Integrity of Mind: Which implies these things,

I. A Freedom from any mean and sinister Ends in what we do.

*Aristotle*, who considered the Nature of Moral Vertues, as well as any Man, saith, there can be no *Magnanimity* without *Simplicity* and *Truth*.

And *Cicero* saith, *Men of Courage and Magnanimity, are Men of Simplicity and Truth, and not given to Tricks.* It is the Sense of its own Weak-

ness which disposes any living Creature to craft and cunning: The Lion knows his own strength and despises it; the Fox is sensible he hath not strength enough for his own Security, and therefore tries all other ways to compass his End. A Spirit of *Magnanimity* is above all little Arts and Shifts, which tend only to some mean and pitiful End, not worthy to be regarded. Men of Artifice and Design may think it Weakness and Folly; but it is really a Greatness of Mind which makes a good and wise Man despise such things as unbecoming that true Greatness which lies in a generous Integrity: which cunning Men can no more reach to, even when they affect it, than an Actor upon a Stage can the true Greatness of a Prince.

2. Sincere and unaffected Goodness: Which is that, which *Aristotle* calls *Καλοκαγαθία*, and makes absolutely necessary to *Magnanimity*. The first thing in the Character of a good Man among the *Moralists* is, that he be inwardly so; not taking upon him the Appearance and Shew of Vertue for the sake of others; but forming his Mind and Temper according to the Principles and Rules of it. And when he hath done this, the whole Course of his Actions will be agreeable thereto: he will not only be just and temperate, but kind and obliging; ready to do good to all, according to his Circumstances; and behaving himself under all, as becomes a good Man.

(2.) There must not only be *Integrity* but *Courage* and *Resolution*; without which, in difficult times, it is impossible to maintain Integrity.

I do not by this mean any sudden and violent Heats, which rather shew the greatness of the Passions than of the Mind; but a calm and sedate Courage, which exceeds the other, as a Man of true Valour doth one that is rash and fool-hardy. The latter may do bolder things than the other; but none of the *Moralists* allow it to be true *Fortitude*; for that must be guided by Reason and Discretion. The bold and daring

Ἀκολουθεῖ δὲ τῇ μεγαλοψυχίᾳ Ἀπλότης  
& Ἀλήθεια. *Arist.* de Virt & Vitiis.

Itaq; Viros fortes, magnanimos, eodém  
que bonos & simplices: veritatis amicos;  
miniméque fallaces esse volumus. *Off. l. 1.*

*Nicom. l. 4.*  
c. 3.

Man never considers what he doth; but he is carried on by a sudden and violent *Impetus*, or such an agitation of Spirits, that suffer him not to think; but on he goes, and if he meets with success, it is more owing to his Passion and Heat, than to his Wisdom or Courage. Violent and furious Heats (although under a Pretence of Zeal for Religion) are like the furious On-sets of undisciplined Soldiers, which do more mischief by their want of Order, than they do good by unseasonable Courage. True Courage must be a Regular thing; it must have not only a good End, but a wise Choice of Means; and then the Courage lies in the vigorous Pursuit of it: not being disheartned by difficulties, nor giving over through despondency and disappointments.

(3.) There must be an Indifferency of Mind, as to the Event of doing our Duty. Not a perfect Indifferency, which humane Nature is hardly capable of; but such as keeps a Man's mind firm and constant so as not to be moved from the Dictates of a well-satisfied Conscience by the Motives of this World. It was a remarkable Saying of *Socrates*, which *Antonin.* *Antoninus* takes notice of, *That man, saith he, is of no value, who regards*  
 1. 7. S. 44 *any thing so much as doing his Duty. It is not whether a Man lives or dies, but whether what he doth be just or unjust, whether it becomes a good Man to do it, or not, which he is to look after.*

1. 3. S. 3. *If thou canst not find any thing in life, saith that Excellent Emperour himself, better than Justice and Truth, a sound Mind (*Σωφροσύνη* the word here used) and a discreet Courage; then make this thy great business and apply thy self to it with all thy heart. Let neither popular Applause, nor Power, nor Riches, nor sensual Pleasure draw thee off from it. Choose that which is best and pursue it, ἀπλῶς ἐν ἐλευθερίῳ with simplicity of Mind and the free Inclination of thy Will.*

Off. 1. 1. *But the Roman Orator goes beyond them, when he saith, That Nothing argues so mean and narrow a Mind, as the Love of Riches; nothing savours more of a great Mind, than to contemn them; and if Men enjoy them to bestow them in Beneficence and Liberality. And again,*

1. 3. *To value Justice and Honesty and Kindness and Liberality above Pleasure and Riches and Life it self, and the common good above ones private Interest, argues a truly great Mind, and is most agreeable to humane Nature.*

These things I have mention'd, not only to clear the Nature of *Magnanimity*; but to shew what generous Notions these Heathens had concerning the Practice of Vertue and Integrity, even when it was accompanied with Losses and Hardships for the sake of it; and what a mean Esteem they had in Comparison of that *great Idol*, which the World still worships, *i. e.* Riches.

(2.) I now come to shew the true Measures of *Magnanimity* according to the Christian Doctrine. And that consists in two things:

1. In studying to please God above all things.
2. In choosing rather to suffer than displease him.

Mor. 1. 4. *1. In studying to please God above all things. Aristotle hath observed that Magnanimity hath a particular Respect to Honour: The Question then is, whether it relates to what gets Esteem and Honour among Men; or, to that Honour which comes from God. It's true, the Heathen Moralists knew very little of this; although Aristotle once mentions the Kindness which God hath for Persons of the most excellent and vertuous Minds, as being nearest of Kindred to the Gods. But this was not settled as a Principal among them; but it is the Foundation of all true Reli-*  
 c. 3. *gion*  
 1. 100

gion with us, that our main Care ought to be to please God, and to value other things as they are most pleasing to him. The most refined Atheists of this Age confess, that the Doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles is very Pious and Vertuous; although they look on them as deceived in their Imaginations. We take what they grant, *viz.* that the *Morals* of Christianity are very good; but we say, that it is a heightning and improving of Moral Vertues to make them Divine Graces; and not to practise them meerly as agreeable to Reason, but as pleasing to God. Those who allow a God, who is wise and powerful, do confess, that no Sacrifices are so pleasing to him, as a Pious, devout and vertuous Mind: but then they were to seek, as to the Measures of Piety and Vertue. But that is the Infinite Advantage by the Scriptures, which we enjoy, that by them we know what is most pleasing to God. *He hath* Mc. 6. 7. *shewed thee, O Man, what is good, and what hath the Lord required of thee but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.* When God sheweth us our Duty, we have no longer any ground to dispute it; especially, when it is so agreeable to the Divine Nature, and our own. What can we do better with respect to Mankind, than *to do justly and to love Mercy?* What can become us more with respect to God, than *to walk humbly with our God?* *To walk with God*, is to have a constant Regard to him in the Course of our Lives; thus *Enoch walked with God*, and *Noah and Abraham*: and *to walk humbly with him*, is to maintain a due Sense of our Distance from him and our Dependence upon him. And this *Humility of Mind* doth not take off from true *Magnanimity*; for, it is the *Magnanimity* of Christians that I am speaking of. The *Magnanimity* of *Philosophers* carried them beyond the due bounds of their Dependence upon God; for they presumed upon their own Sufficiency, both as to the Support of their Minds under Difficulties and the making themselves happy. In both which they were lamentably mistaken. But the Humility of Christians in depending upon God for Assistance and Happiness is so far from being inconsistent with *Magnanimity*, that it is not to be had without it. *For*, saith St. Paul, Phil. 4. 13. *I can do all things.* Can any thing be said greater than that? But how? *Through Christ which strengtheneth me.* And this Dependence upon God for his Grace is no more inconsistent with *Magnanimity*, than a Favourite's Greatness is with his Duty and Service to his Prince. The Christian's *Magnanimity* lies in having but one to please: but such a one as is the greatest, the wisest, the happiest Being in the World.

2. But if he cannot please God and the World together, then this *Magnanimity* carries him rather to choose suffering under the World's Displeasure, than to displease God. This seems a hard Choice; but there would be no *Magnanimity* without Difficulty. It may please God, that our Duty and Interest may lie together, and then it is Folly and Humour to choose to suffer when we need not. Where there is true *Magnanimity* in suffering, there is an impartial and prudent weighing and balancing all Circumstances together, before there can be a just Resolution of suffering. And a Man's Courage in suffering depends very much upon the Motives that induced him to it; which every Man's Conscience must judge of.

But there are two sorts of sufferings *Magnanimity* may shew it self in:

(1.) The Necessary and unavoidable Accidents and Calamities of Life.

(2.) The

(2.) The voluntary preferring a suffering Condition rather than sinning against God.

(1.) As to the common Accidents of Life. It is observed by the *Moralists*, that it is a harder thing to bear things that are troublesome, than to abstain from things that are pleasant: The fence of pain and suffering being much more uneasy, than the forbearing what is delightfull; which is only crossing a natural Inclination. And though many persons chose rather to yield to their vicious Inclinations than to avoid the Pains and Diseases which follow them; yet that is because they look on them as uncertain and at a Distance, and hope they may escape them.

*Aristot.*  
Mor. l. 3.  
c. 12.  
*Aug.* 83.  
q. 36.

But when it is certain and present, humane Nature is very tender and sensible of Pain, and shrinks from it; and requires inward Courage to support it self under it. It is observed by the Roman Orator, that a peculiar kind of Courage is necessary for suffering Pains and Diseases; for many that have been brave Men in the Field, yet could not *viriliter ægotare*, behave themselves like Men when they came to be sick. The truth is, all Mankind abhor suffering so much, that one of the great Inducements to the study of *Morality* of old, was to find out some *Antidotes* against the common Accidents of Life.

For they soon found there were some sufferings incident to humane Nature, which all the Art and Skill of the wisest Men could never prevent. Our Bodies are continually subject to Pains, to Diseases, to Corruption and Dissolution. Our Estates to Violence, Fraud and Misfortune. Our Houses and Cities to Flames, to Earthquakes, to Inundations. Our Friends and Relations are all liable to the same Calamities with our selves, and that makes our Trouble the greater.

What now should wise Men do? Can they hope to stem the Tide, and to turn back the Stream? No, that is too violent for them. Can they raise any Banks or Sea-Walls against them to keep them out? All such are vain and fruitless. What then? Shall they strip themselves of all the Comforts of Life, that they may leave nothing to Misfortune? So some did, to no great purpose, unless they could shake off their Passions too. But this doth not look like *Magnanimity*, but Cowardice; not overcoming an Enemy, but running away from him. By the same Method, they must go naked to avoid Robbery; and live on the tops of Mountains to escape a Deluge.

But some thought these things look'd most terrible at a Distance; whereas if they consider'd how common they were, they would learn to bear them better. But *Carneades* said well, *Malevoli animi Solatium est turba miserorum*; it is a kind of ill-natur'd Comfort which one draws from the commonness of Calamities. And after all it is no real Satisfaction to a Man's mind, to think that so many suffer as he doth; it is like the unnatural Pleasure of Revenge, which one Man takes in another's Pain.

There is one thing it serves well for, and that is to shew the folly of great Impatience under such things which the rest of Mankind bear. Thus *Julian* in his Epistle to *Amerius* relates a Story of *Democritus* his dealing with *Darius* upon the loss of his beloved Wife. After several ineffectual ways of comforting him; at last he asked him, Whether bringing her to Life would not put an End to his Grief? No doubt of it. But how should this be done? Let me alone for that, said the Philosopher, if you will provide me all the things I shall desire in order

to

to it. After great Care taken in providing many things for him, *Darius* asked him if he had all he wanted? No, said he; there is one thing more I must have, and you are the most likely Person to furnish me with it. In short, you must get me three Names to be put upon her Monument of such Persons who have gone to their Graves without sorrow or trouble; and you, said he, have very large and populous Dominions, and no doubt if such a thing be to be had, you can procure it. *Darius* was struck with this, and after some consideration said, *he doubted he could not.* Why then, said the Philosopher smiling, are not you ashamed to be guilty of so much Folly as to be so exceedingly cast down under such a Calamity, as though you were the only person in the World that underwent it? This was agreeable enough to his Humour in exposing the Folly of Mankind; which was a Subject large enough for his whole Life; but he was too pleasant upon it.

I do not deny but the *Moralists* did find out some very usefull Considerations to bear Men up under the common Accidents of Life; but those of greatest Moment, were such as are much improved by *Christianity*; viz. the Wisdom of Providence, the Usefulness of Trials, the Benefit of Patience, and the Expectation of a better State.

(2.) As to voluntary and chosen Sufferings. We have in Scripture several extraordinary Instances of this kind of *Magnanimity*; such as *Abraham's* leaving his Kindred and Country and going he knew not whither on God's Command, and his readiness to sacrifice his Son; which argued an entire Sacrifice of himself to the Will of God. Such was *Moses* his choosing rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of *Pharaoh's* Court. Such was the Son of God's choosing to suffer for our sakes, with admirable Resignation to the Divine Will; and praying for his Persecutors under the greatest Agonies on the Cross. Such was the Apostle's Resolution and Courage, when they rejoiced to be accounted worthy to suffer for the sake of *Christ*; when they were more than Conquerors in the midst of Persecutions. And truly the *Magnanimity* of suffering rather than sinning, was never so much shewn to the World as in the Case of the *Primitive Christians*. There were some few *Heroick* instances of Suffering for Truth among the Heathens; but they were no more to be compared with the numerous Examples of the *Primitive Church* than the Miracles of the *Vestal Virgins* were with those of the *Apostles*.

It could not but amaze the common sort of Spectators of *Rome*, who were wont to see the *Gladiators*, (who were either hired or condemned to that cruel Entertainment of others with their blood) to behold a sort of grave and serious persons expose themselves to so much Torment and Cruelty, when so small a matter as burning a little Incense would set them free. This was a new Spectacle to the World, and it could not but put them upon thinking what strange sort of *Philosophy* this was, which inspired ordinary persons with such a *Magnanimity* in suffering. They had never found those who pretended to *Philosophy* among them very fond of suffering for the Doctrine they taught. They rather liked the Example of *Aristotle* than *Socrates*; who when the People of *Athens* were enraged against him, withdrew to *Chalcis*; and when he was upbraided with it, made a witty Excuse; that he had no mind the City of *Athens* should sin twice against *Philosophy*. Whereas the *Christians* were so forward to suffer for their Doctrine, that it was imputed as a Fault to them; and it appears by *Tertullian* that some out-Tertull., ad went Scap.

went the bounds of *Christianity* in offering themselves too freely to it. This made such as *Antoninus* and others impute all their Sufferings to *an invincible Obstinacy and a sort of Madnes which possessed them*: which had been easily confuted, if they would have had the *Patience* to have examin'd the Reasons and Grounds of their Religion, as they did the peculiar Doctrines of the several Sects of *Philosophers*. But this is not all which *Christian Magnanimity* doth imply; for it is not only a *Spirit of Power, but of Love and of a sound Mind*. And so it hath.

*Antonin.*

1. 11. Sect. 3.

*Arrian.*

1. 4. c. 7.

*Mor.* 1. 4.

c. 3.

II. A Respect to the *Humours and Passions* of Men. And truly, there is such a Variety and Uncertainty in them; so much Folly and Mistake; so much Prejudice and Peevishness in some; so much Wilfulness and Stiffness in others; so little Regard to the true Interests of Religion and Vertue, under all the pretences to it; that those who sincerely desire to promote them had need of *Magnanimity* to bear them up against such Humours and Distempers of Men's Minds. *Aristotle* hath well observed that *Magnanimity* doth go beyond the consideration of Dangers. *It makes a man more ready to do Kindnesses than to receive them; and to forget Injuries*. I add, *and to forgive them*; for else, it is rather want of Memory, than Magnanimity. It is well he adds one thing, *viz.* that he that hath Magnanimity is *Ἀυτάρκτης*, *Contented within himself*; so he had need to be; for he will find very little Satisfaction abroad, especially in an Age when *Sincerity* is almost lost; when Men have used themselves to so much Hypocrisie and Dissimulation with God and Man, that they can zealously pretend to love what they would be glad to ruine, and cry up Peace and Unity only to get an Opportunity to destroy them. But still true Magnanimity keeps a Man's own mind at Ease, and *makes him to govern himself*, as the same Philosopher observes, *with due Temper and Moderation in all things*. Such a one is not only easie to himself, but to all others, as far as is consistent with his Duty. For a mind truly great, hath nothing of Bitterness, or Sourness; Peevishness, or Ill-will to the rest of Mankind. All malice and cruelty argue a mean and base Spirit. The more noble and generous any Tempers are, the more tender and compassionate they are, the more ready to oblige, the more easie to forgive, the more willing to be reconciled.

But to be more particular, there are two things implied in *this Spirit of Love and of a sound Mind*.

(1.) The making all reasonable Allowances for the Infirmities of others. It makes men to consider the Prejudices of Education; the Variety and Weakness of most men's Judgments; the Power of Perswasion; the Bias of Parties; and the Shame and Reproach which Persons undergo that break off from them, after they have been once ensnared by them. On these Accounts it makes them rather pity than triumph over the Follies of Mankind. There are two things which a great mind doth most abhor in Religion, and are most directly contrary to a *Spirit of Love and a sound Mind*; and these are *Hypocrisie and Cruelty*; which make men false to God, and Enemies to mankind. These two often go together; and although they are masked under a Pretence of Religion, yet there are no two things more opposite to the true Spirit and Design of it. *St. John* concludes that Man to have no true Love to God who doth not love his Brother. *He that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

*Joh.* 1. 12.

And

And we may argue the other way ; If a man doth not love God, how can he love his Brother ? When the Love of God is the best Foundation for Charity and kindness to our Brethren ; who were at first made after the Image of God, and have it again renewed in them by the Power of Divine Grace *in Righteousness and true Holiness*. And even where Eph. 4.24 that doth not appear, yet there is a Tenderness and Compassion due to mankind, as far as is consistent with the Order and Government of the World.

(2.) The *Spirit of Love and of a sound Mind*, consists in laying aside private Animosities and Heats for a publick and general Good. That is a thing too great and too sacred, to be exposed and ridiculed, as though it were only a popular Pretence for Faction and Sedition. Whereas nothing is more directly opposite to it ; for therefore it is called Faction and Sedition, because it is against it. If it hath been abused by Men of ill Minds, so have the best things in the World ; but they do not lose their Nature and Excellency by it. If there be not such a thing as a common Good, whence comes any Man's obligation to preserve Order and Government, and to seek the Safety and Welfare of his Country, although it may be to the hazard of his own Life ? If there be such a thing, it deserves our regard in the first place, and we ought to lay aside all Prejudices, and mutual Animosities and the Interests of particular Parties, and heartily to promote that which is our true common Interest, as we are English-men and Protestants of the Church of *England* ; which is a great and considerable part of the Christian Church, and the chief of the Reformation. It is hard for any not to see that the whole Protestant Interest lies at stake ; and that the Preservation of it depends very much on our Conduct and Union at this time.

But if we find any to be humourfome and peevish, any to struggle more for the interest of a party to make it uppermost, than for our common Good, although it be a very sad consideration and bodes very ill to us all ; yet we have that poor Comfort left us, that Men were as ill disposed even in the Apostles times. *For*, saith St. Paul, (at a time when Phil. 2.21. one would have thought they should have been much better inclined) *All men seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's*. I hope it cannot be said of *all* now ; but I fear it is so true of too many, that it is one of the worst *Symptoms* of the present State of our Affairs. And that which makes it more deplorable is, that some Men have entertained such Suspicion and Jealousie of each other, that he that goes about to reconcile them, instead of making them Friends, is look'd on as a common Enemy. I am afraid there is not Sincerity and Integrity enough left to be a Foundation for uniting several parties among us ; at least there wants an Opinion of it. And as long as there are such Mistrusts and Jealousies, the greatest Integrity is so far useles.

Some learned and good Men have been of late apt to persuade themselves and others, that the glorious and happy Times of the Church are coming on ; I could be glad to be of their opinion ; for it is a comfortable thing to a man who travels in an ill Road and with bad Company, whom he is perpetually afraid of, to see at a distance a pleasant and safe Country, where he shall be rid of his Fears and Dangers. But I confess, I cannot much please my self with such thoughts, till I see the Tempers of Men's minds begin to change towards one another. If I could once see the *Spirit of Love and a sound Mind* prevail among us ;

if men would be contented to sacrifice their Humours and Piques to the publick Interest; in short, if there were any hopes Men would be wise and good, there were then a great Foundation for hope, that all things would be settled among us, so as to continue for succeeding Generations.

Gal. 7. 5. 15. But if Men will persist in their own wilfull Humours; if they had rather all should perish, then they not compass their own Ends; we need no foreign Enemies to come in upon us, we shall soon come to that height of Animosity, *as to bite and devour one another*; and then it is an easie Inference, *that we shall be consumed one of another*. I am far from thinking our Case desperate; for I hope Men have not lost all their Sense and Zeal for our common Interest; but if Men's heats and passions increase and grow fiercer, a Man needs not pretend to prophecy to foretell what the dreadful Consequence will be.

The true Spirit of Religion seems to be buried in Men's warm Contentions about it; and some have pretended to a sort of Zeal without Conscience, to Religion without Faith, and to Scruples without common Honesty.

If ever God designs to do us good, there must be a great Alteration in Men's Tempers and Manners. We must have more Sincerity and Integrity among us; the want of which hath caused such a general Mistrust of one another; that if *Faith* were to save the Nation, I am afraid there is hardly enough left in it. And it looks like one of the Symptoms of the Day of Judgment upon us: For, *if the Son of Man should come, he would hardly find Faith upon Earth*.

But instead of discoursing of *Magnanimity*, I am sensible I have run into the Object and Reason of our Fears. But therefore to conclude all, I shall speak briefly to the last Particular, which was:

(3.) To consider what Arguments and Means there are to support us against our Fears; or to attain to that *Christian Magnanimity* I have been discoursing of. And there are two great Arguments which Christianity doth particularly recommend to us:

1. Let things go as ill as we can fear in this World; if we are sincere Christians, there is a far better State to come; to which we shall be admitted when we are once out of this troublesome and sinfull World. There will be no Hurries and Confusions, no Jealousies and Suspicions, no Piques and Animosities. The highest Regions of the Air are the most calm and serene; all the Clouds and Storms and blustering Winds are below, and arise from the *Atmosphere*. If our Minds were more loose from the World we should be more at quiet: For, at the bottom, the Considerations of this World make Men so troublesome in it. It is Honour or Power or Riches which make them so unquiet, and endeavouring to supplant and undermine one another: If Men could learn to be content with that which they pretend was all they so long and so impatiently desired, there might be some hopes of seeing something like Peace and Unity among us: but if Liberty be thought to signifie nothing without Power, it is reasonable to suppose that Power will signifie nothing, unless it be all in their own Hands. And what can they imagine the rest of the Nation will do? Will they suffer an established Church, and such a one as ours is (which I think an *Apostolical Church*, as to Doctrine, Worship and Government, if there be any now in the World) to be run down with the violent Heats of some men, and look on as wholly unconcerned? They are extremely mistaken in the  
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Temper of the Nation who think so. But if Men will not be quiet, when they have all they pretended to desire, what can we expect but further Animosities will discourage our Friends, animate our common Enemies, and expose us all to confusion, if not to ruine. If Men loved this World less and another better, they would be more quiet here, and be more carefull to prepare for that better State. *If our Conversation were in Heaven*, as it ought to be, with what Contempt should we look down upon the busie Designs, the restless Cares, the vain Hopes and the perplexing Fears of the greatest Part of Mankind? Then we should have more Peace and Tranquillity in our Minds, while we live, and greater Satisfaction when we come to die. For Integrity and Innocency will keep us most from giving disturbance to others, and from finding any in our own Breasts. *Whose hearkeneth unto Wisdom shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from the Fear of Evil.* Prov. i. 13.

2. We are assured that we are under the constant Care of Divine Providence. The Tranquillity of our Minds in this World depends very much upon the Esteem we have of Providence and the Trust we repose in God. What makes Children pass their time without solicitous thoughts about themselves, but the Confidence they have in the Wisdom and Care of their Parents? What makes Passengers lie down at rest in a Ship at Sea, but because they trust to the Conduct of their Pilot? We cannot alter the Methods of Providence by all our Solitude; God will govern the World by his own Measures and not by ours. The Government is his, the Duty of Submission is ours. Let us not then be peevish and quarrelsome at what he doth; but make the best Use of any extraordinary Instance of his Providence which seems to be intended for our Good, unless we turn it another Way.

But it is not enough to be meerly contented with Providence; but we ought to be active and usefull in our own Places to promote the common Interest; and not to repine and murmur at what is necessary for the Support of it. Let us not torment our selves with Fears of what may and what may not happen; but let us commit our selves to God in well-doing as to our Creatour and Preserver.

# SERMON XXVIII.

Preached at

**S<sup>t</sup>. Laurence - Jury,**

*April 7. 1691.*

I TIM. I. 15.

*This is a faithfull saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners, of whom I am chief.*

**I**F these Words were to be understood without any Restriction or Limitation *that Christ Jesus came into the World to save sinners*, they would overthrow the great Design of the Gospel, and make its excellent Precepts useles and ineffectual. For, to what purpose should Men be put upon the severe Practice of Repentance, Mortification and a continued Course of a Holy Life, if the meer being *Sinners* did sufficiently qualifie them for Salvation? This indeed would be thought a Doctrine *worthy of all Acceptation* by the *greatest Sinners*; but it could not be a *faithfull saying*, being not agreeable either to the Nature of God, or Revelation of his Will by *Christ Jesus*. But St. Paul speaks of such *Sinners* as himself had been; *i. e.* such as had been great Sinners, but had truly and sincerely repented. *Of whom I am chief*. What then? Must we look on him as the Standard and Measure of such *Sinners* whom *Christ Jesus* came to save? What will then become of all those who have been Sinners of a higher Rank than ever he was? It's true in the Verses before the Text, he sets out his Sins, as a humble Penitent is wont to do, with the worst Colours and deepest Aggravations, *Who was before a blasphemers and a persecutor, and injurious*; but yet he adds, *that he obtained Mercy because he did it ignorantly, in unbelief*. How then is St. Paul the *Chief of Sinners*? Are Sins of Ignorance and Mistake the greatest of Sins, for which Christ died? Is there no Expiation for any other by *Jesus Christ*? What will become then of all such who sin against Knowledge and Conscience, and not in Ignorance and Unbelief? Can none of these hope for Mercy by *Christ Jesus*, although they do truly repent? But *the Blood of Christ* is said elsewhere to cleanse us from all Sins; not while we continue in them, but if we repent and forsake them. And *Jesus Christ* is said to be a Propitiation for

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our Sins; and not for ours only, but for the Sins of the whole World. And therefore this Expression of St. Paul notes his great Humility and deep Sense of his own Sins; but doth not exclude others from the hopes of Pardon whose Sins have other Aggravations than his had. For, if we leave out the last words as peculiar to his Case, yet the other contain in them a true Proposition and of the greatest Importance to Mankind; *This is a faithfull saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the World to save sinners.*

This, you may say, is a matter out of all doubt among all such who hope for Salvation by *Christ Jesus*; for all are agreed, that one way or other we are to be *saved by him*. But there is great Difficulty as to the Way of *saving sinners* by *Christ Jesus*; whether by the *Doctrine and Example of the Man Christ Jesus*, by the *Power he attained through his Sufferings*; Or, by the *Eternal Son of God's assuming our Nature, and suffering in our stead in order to the reconciling God to us, and making a Propitiation for our Sins*. These are two very different *Hypotheses* or *Notions* of *Christ's coming to save sinners*; and the former seems more easie to be understood and believed; and the other seems to have insuperable Difficulties in point of Reason; and to run our Religion into *Mysteries*, which expose our Faith and make Christianity appear contemptible to Men of Sense and Understanding. Is it not therefore much better to embrace such a Scheme of it, as will have the least Objection against it, that so Men of Reason may not be tempted to Infidelity, and Men of Superstition may not under the Colour of *Mysteries* bring in the most absurd and unreasonable *Doctrines*?

These are plausible Insinuations, and would be apt to prevail on considering Men's minds, if they were to form and make a Religion that might be most accommodated to the *Genius and Humour* of the Age they live in. And truly no Men (by their own Authority) can pretend to a Right to impose on others any *Mysteries of Faith*, or any such things which are above their Capacity to understand. But that is not our Case; for we all profess to believe and receive *Christianity* as a *Divine Revelation*; and God (we say) may require from us the belief of what we may not be able to comprehend, especially if it relates to himself, or such things which are consequent upon the Union of the Divine and Humane Nature. Therefore our business is to consider, whether any such things be contained in that *Revelation* which we all own; and if they be, we are bound to believe them, although we are not able to comprehend them.

Now here are two remarkable *Characters* in these Words, by which we may examine these different *Hypotheses* concerning the way of *Salvation by Jesus Christ*.

I. *It is a faithfull saying*, and therefore must be contained in that *Revelation* which God hath made concerning our Salvation by Christ.

II. *It is worthy of all Acceptation*; i. e. most usefull and beneficial to Mankind.

Now by these two I shall proceed in the Examination of them.

I. Which is most agreeable to the revealed Will of God.

II. Which doth offer fairest for the Benefit and Advantage of Mankind.

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1. Which is most agreeable to the revealed Will of God. For that we are sure is the most *faithful saying*; since Men of Wit and Reason may deceive us, but God cannot. When the Apostles first preached this Doctrine to the World, they were not bound to believe what they affirmed to be a *faithfull saying* till they gave sufficient Evidence of their Authority from God, by the wonderfull Assistance of the Holy Ghost. But now this *faithfull Saying* is contained in the Books of the *New Testament*, by which we are to judge of the Truth of all *Christian Doctrines*. And when two different Senses of Places of Scripture are offer'd, we are to consider, which is most reasonable to be preferr'd. And herein we are allow'd to exercise our Reason as much as we please; and the more we do so, the sooner we shall come to satisfaction in this matter.

Now according to reason we may judge that Sense to be preferr'd.

(1.) Which is most plain and easie and agreeable to the most received Sense of Words; not that which is forced and intricate, or which puts improper and *metaphorical* Senses upon Words which are commonly taken in other Senses; especially when it is no *Sacramental* thing, which in its own Nature is *Figurative*.

(2.) That which suits most with the Scope and Design not only of the particular Places, but of the whole *New Testament*; which is, to magnifie God and to depress Man; to set forth, the infinite Love and Condescention of God in giving his Son to be a *Propitiation for our Sins*; to set up the Worship of one *true God* in Opposition to *Creatures*; to represent and declare the mighty Advantages Mankind receive by the *Sufferings of Christ Jesus*.

(3.) That which hath been generally received in the *Christian Church* to be the Sense of those places. For, we are certain, this was always look'd on as a matter of great Concernment to all Christians; and they had as great Capacity of understanding the Sense of the Apostles; and the Primitive Church had greater helps for knowing it than others at so much greater Distance. And therefore the Sense is not to be taken from modern *Inventions* or *Criticisms*, or Pretences to *Revelation*; but that which was at first deliver'd to the *Christian Church* and hath been since received and embraced by it in the several Ages; and hath been most strenuously asserted, when it hath met with Opposition; as founded on *Scripture* and the *general Consent* of the *Christian Church*.

(4.) That which best agrees with the *Characters* of those Persons from whom we receive the Christian Faith; and those are *Christ Jesus* and his *holy Apostles*. For, if their *Authority* be lost, our Religion is gone; and their Authority depends upon their *Sincerity* and *Faithfulness*, and Care to inform the World aright in matters of so great Importance.

(1.) I begin with the Character which the Apostles give of *Christ Jesus* himself; which is, that he was a Person of the greatest Humility and Condescension, that he did not assume to himself that which he might justly have done. For let the Words of *St. Paul* be understood either as to the *Nature*, or *Dignity* of *Christ*, it is certain that they must imply thus much, that when *Christ Jesus* was here on Earth, he was not of a vain assuming humour, that he did not boast of himself, nor magnifie his own greatness, but was contented to be look'd on as other Men; although he had at that time far greater and diviner Excellency in him than the World would believe. Less than this cannot be

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made of those Words of the Apostle, *Who being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no Reputation, and took upon him the form of a Servant.* Phil. 2. 6.

Now this being the Character given of him, let us consider what he doth affirm concerning himself. For although he was far from drawing the People after him, by setting forth his own Perfection; yet upon just Occasions, when the *Jews* contested with him, he did assert such things, which must savour of Vanity and Ostentation, or else must imply that he was the *Eternal Son of God*. For, all Mankind are agreed that the highest Degree of Ambition lies in affecting Divine Honour, or for a meer Man to be thought a *God*. How severely did God punish *Herod* for being pleased with the People's Folly in crying out, *the Voice of God and not of Man*? And therefore he could never have born with such positive Assertions and such repeated Defences of his being *the Son of God* in such a manner as implied his being so from Eternity. This in his Disputes with the *Jews* he affirms several times, *that he came down from Heaven*, not in a *Metaphorical* but in a proper Sense, as appears by those words, *What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before*? In another Conference he asserted, *that he was before Abraham*. Which the *Jews* so literally understood, that without a *Metaphor* they went about to stone him; little imagining that by *Abraham* the calling of the *Gentiles* was to be understood. But above all, is that Expression which he used to the *Jews* at another Conference, *I and my Father are one*; which they understood in such a manner that immediately they took up stones to have stoned him. What means all this Rage of the *Jews* against him? What? For saying *that he had Unity of Consent with his Father*? No certainly: *But the Jews misunderstood him*. Let us suppose it; would not our *Saviour* have immediately explained himself to prevent so dangerous a Misconstruction? But he asked them, what it was they stoned him for? They answered him directly and plainly, *because that thou being a man makest thy self a God*. This was home to the purpose. And here was the time for him to have denied it, if it had not been so. But doth he deny it? Doth he say, it would be *Blasphemy* in him to own it? No; but he goes about to defend it; and proves it to be no *Blasphemy* for him to say that he was the *Son of God*; i. e. so as to be *God*, as the *Jews* understood it. Can we imagine that a meer Man knowing himself to be such, should assume this to himself; and yet *God* to bear witness to him not only by *Miracles*, but by a *Voice from Heaven*, wherein he was called his beloved *Son in whom he was well pleased*? Could *God* be pleased with a mortal, finite, despicable Creature, as the *Jews* thought him, that assumed to himself to be *God* and maintained and defended it among his own People in a solemn Conference at a very publick Place, in one of the *Portico's* of the Temple; and this he persisted in to the last. For, when the *High Priest* adjured him by the living *God* to tell, *whether he were the Christ the Son of God*, (for he, no doubt, had heard of the result of this Conference in *Solomon's* Porch) *Jesus said unto him, Thou hast said*. *St. Mark*, more expressly, *Jesus said I am*. And this was the *Blasphemy*, for which they put him to death; as appears by the *Evangelists*. So that this ought to be a dispute only between *Jews* and *Christians*; since it was the very Point, for which they condemned him to death. And in his last most divine Prayer just before his Suffering, he owns the *Glory* which he had with the *Father* before the World had a Being. *And now, O Father, glorifie*

Joh. 17. 5. glorifie thou me with the glory which I had with thee, before the World was. Was this nothing but the *Glory* which God had designed to give him? This is so far from being peculiar to Christ, that it is common to all whom God designs to glorifie; and takes away the distinction between the *Decree* and the *Execution* of it.

(2.) As to the *Apostles*, the Reason we believe their Testimony is, that they were Men of great Sincerity and Plainness, and of great Zeal for the Honour and Glory of God. And according to this *Character*, let us examine what they say concerning *Christ Jesus*.

He that was most conversant with him, and beloved by him, and lived to see his *Divinity* contested by some, and denied by others, is most ample in setting it forth in his Admirable, Sublime, and Divine Introduction to his Gospel. Which all the Wit of Mankind can never make tolerable Sense of, if they deny *Christ's* being the *Eternal Son of God*; and it is he, that hath preserved those *Conferences* with the *Jews* wherein he asserts his own *Divinity*.

St. Paul was a Stranger to him while he lived; but at the same time when he was so zealous to perswade the *Gentiles* to the *Worship of God* and not of *Creatures*, he calls him *God*, over all blessed for evermore. And when he saith, that the *Eternal Power and Godhead are known by the Creation of the World*, he attributes the *Creation of all things* to *Christ*, applying to him those words of the *Psalmist*, *Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the Foundation of the Earth and the Heaven, the Work of thy hands.* Which cannot be understood of any *Metaphorical Creation*.

And after the strictest Examination of Copies, those will be found the best, which have that Reading on which our Translation is grounded. And without Controversie great is the *Mystery of Godliness*, *God was manifest in the Flesh.* So that *God's being manifest in the Flesh* is made a great part of the *Mystery of Christianity*.

But here arises a Difficulty, which deserves to be consider'd; i. e. " If there were nothing in the Christian Doctrine, but the Way of Saving sinners by the Doctrine and Example of Christ, there would be little Objection to be made to it; since the obtaining Eternal Life is certainly the best thing can be proposed to Mankind, and the Precepts of Christ are Divine and Spiritual, plain and easie to be understood, and agreeable to the Reason of Mankind; but many other things are imposed on Men as necessary to be believed concerning *Christ Jesus*, as to his *Divinity*, *Incarnation*, and the *Hypostatical Union* of both Natures, which perplex and confound our Understandings; and yet these things are not only deliver'd as *Mysteries of the Christian Faith*; but the Belief of them is required as necessary to the Salvation of Sinners; whereas, if they are not revealed they are no longer *Mysteries*; and if they are not revealed, how come they to be made Articles of Faith? The Scripture knows of no other *Mysteries of Faith* but such as were hidden before the Revelation of them, but since they are revealed they are plain and open to all Men's Capacities; and therefore it is a great Injury to the Plainness and Simplicity of the Gospel to impose such incomprehensible Mysteries, as necessary Articles of Faith, and it is abusing the Credulity of Mankind, to make such things necessary to be believed, which are impossible to be understood. But those who have ever loved to deceive and abuse the rest of the World, have been always fond of the Name of *Mysteries*; and therefore all such things are to be suspected, which come under

“ under that Name. For, all such points which will not bear Examination, must be wrapt up and reverenced under the Name of *Mysteries*, that is, of things to be swallow'd without being understood. “ *But the Scripture never calls that a Mystery which is incomprehensible in it self, though never so much revealed.*

*Discourse of  
the Word  
Mystery,  
&c. p. 5.*

This is the main force of the Objection, which I shall endeavour to remove by shewing;

- (1.) That God may justly require from us in general, the Belief of what we cannot comprehend.
- (2.) That which way soever the Way of Salvation by *Christ* be explained, there will be something of that Nature found in it; and that those who reject the Mysteries of Faith run into greater Difficulties than those who assert them.
- (3.) That no more is required as a necessary Article of Faith than what is plainly and clearly revealed:

(1.) That God may justly require from us in general, the Belief of what we cannot comprehend. It is to very little purpose to enquire whether the Word *Mystery* in *Scripture* be applied to such particular Doctrines, whose Substance is revealed, but the manner of them is incomprehensible by us; for why may not we make use of such a Word whereby to express things truly revealed, but above our Comprehension? We are certain the Word *Mystery* is used for things far less difficult and abstruse; and why may it not then be fitly applied to such matters, which are founded on Divine Revelation, but yet are too deep for us to go to the bottom of them? Are there not *Mysteries* in Arts, *Mysteries* in Nature, *Mysteries* in Providence? And what Absurdity is there to call those *Mysteries*, which in some measure are known, but in much greater unknown to us? Although therefore in the Language of *Scripture* it be granted, that the word *Mystery* is most frequently applied to things before hidden, but now revealed, yet there is no Incongruity in calling that a *Mystery*, which being revealed, hath yet something in it which our understandings cannot reach to. But it is meer cavilling to insist on a Word, if the Thing it self be granted. The chief thing therefore to be done is, to shew that God may require from us the belief of such things which are incomprehensible by us. For, God may require any thing from us, which it is reasonable for us to do; if it be then reasonable for us to give assent where the manner of what God hath revealed is not comprehended, then God may certainly require it from us. Hath not God revealed to us that *in six days he made Heaven and Earth and all that is therein*? But is it not reasonable for us to believe this, unless we are able to comprehend the manner of God's production of things? Here we have something revealed and that plainly enough, *viz.* that God created all things, and yet, here is a *Mystery* remaining as to the manner of doing it. Hath not God plainly revealed that there shall be a *Resurrection* of the dead? and must we think it unreasonable to believe it, till we are able to comprehend all the Changes of the Particles of Matter from the *Creation* to the *General Resurrection*? But it is said that there is no Contradiction in this, but there is in the *Mystery of the Trinity and Incarnation*. It is strange Boldness in Men to talk thus of *Monstrous Contradictions* in things above their reach. The *Atheists* may as well say, *Infinite Power* is a *Monstrous Contradiction*;

*Observations on Dr. Wallis his four Letters, p. 4.*

*tradition*; and God's *Immensity* and his other unsearchable Perfections are *Monstrous Paradoxes* and *Contradictions*. Will Men never learn to distinguish between *Numbers* and the Nature of *Things*? For *three* to be *one* is a *Contradiction* in *Numbers*; but whether an Infinite Nature can communicate it self to three *different Substances* without such a *Division* as is among created Beings, must not be determined by bare *Numbers*, but by the absolute *Perfections* of the Divine Nature; which must be owned to be above our *Comprehension*.

For let us examine some of those *Perfections* which are most clearly revealed, and we shall find this true. The *Scripture* plainly reveals, that *God* is from *everlasting to everlasting*; that he *was and is, and is to come*; but shall we not believe the Truth of this till we are able to fathom the *Abyss* of God's *Eternity*? I am apt to think (and I have some thoughtful Men concurring with me) that there is no greater Difficulty in the Conception of the *Trinity* and *Incarnation*, than there is of *Eternity*. Not, but that there is great Reason to believe it; but from hence it appears that our Reason may oblige us to believe some things which it is not possible for us to comprehend. We know that either God must have been for ever, or it is impossible he ever should be; for if he should come into Being when he was not, he must have some Cause of his Being; and that which was the first Cause would be God. But, if he was for ever he must be from himself; and what Notion or Conception can we have in our Minds concerning it? And yet, *Atheistical* Men can take no Advantage from hence; because their own most absurd *Hypothesis* hath the very same Difficulty in it. For something must have been for ever. And it is far more reasonable to suppose it of an Infinite and Eternal Mind, which hath Wisdom and Power and Goodness to give Being to other things, than of dull, stupid and senseless Matter, which could never move it self, nor give Being to any thing besides. Here we have therefore a thing which must be owned by all; and yet such a thing which can be conceived by none. Which shews the narrowness and shortness of our Understandings, and how unfit they are to be the Measures of the Possibilities of things. *Vain men would be wise*; they would fain go to the very bottom of things, when alas! they scarce understand the very Surface of them. They will allow no *Mysteries* in Religion; and yet every thing is a *Mystery* to them. They cry out of *Cheats* and *Impostures* under the Notion of *Mysteries*; and yet there is not a Spire of Grass but is a *Mystery* to them; they will bear with nothing in Religion which they cannot comprehend, and yet there is scarce any thing in the World which they can comprehend. But above other things the *Divine Perfections*, even those which are most absolute and necessary are above their reach. For let such Men try their Imaginations about God's *Eternity*, not meerly how he should be from himself, but how God should co-exist with all the Differences of Times, and yet there be no Succession in his own Being. I do not say there is such Difficulty to conceive a Rock standing still when the Waves run by it; or the *Gnomon* of a Dial when the Shadow passes from one Figure to another; because these are gross un-active things; but the Difficulty is far greater where the Being is perfect and always active. For, where there is Succession there is a passing out of not being in such a duration into being in it; which is not consistent with the absolute Perfection of the Divine Nature. And therefore God must be all at once what he is, without any respect to the Difference of Time past, present



or to come. From whence *Eternity* was defined by *Boethius* to be a perfect and complete Possession all at once of everlasting Life. But how can we form any Conception in our Minds of that being all at once, which hath such different Acts as must be measur'd by a long Succession of Time? As, the creating and dissolving the Frame of the World; the promising and sending the *Messias*; the declaring and executing a general Judgment; how can these things be consistent with a permanent Instant, or a Continuance of being without Succession? For, it is impossible for us in this Case, as to God's Eternity, to form a clear and distinct *Idea* in our Mind, of that which both *Reason* and *Revelation* convince us must be. The most we can make of our Conception of it is, that God hath neither Beginning of Being, nor End of Days; but that he always was, and always must be. And this is rather a necessary Conclusion from Reason and Scripture, than any distinct Notion or Conception of Eternity in our Minds. From whence it evidently follows, that God may reveal something to us, which we are bound to believe, and yet after that Revelation the Manner of it may be incomprehensible by us, and consequently a *Mystery* to us.

Hath not God revealed to us in *Scripture* the *Spirituality* of his own Nature? That *he is a Spirit* and therefore will be worship'd in Spirit and in Truth; For, that is a true Reason why Spiritual Worship should be most agreeable to him. Now, if we could have a clear, distinct, positive Notion in our Minds of God's Spiritual Nature, we might then pretend that there is nothing *mysterious* in this, since it is revealed.

But let such Men examine their own thoughts about this matter; and try, whether the utmost they can attain to, be not something *Negative*, viz. because great Absurdities would follow if we attributed any thing *Corporeal* to God; for, then he must be compounded of Parts, and so he may be dissolved; then he must be confined to a certain Place, and not every where present; he cannot have the Power of acting and self-determining which a meer Body hath not. For the clearest Notion we can have of *Body*, is, that it is made up of some things as parts of it, which may be separated from each other, and is confined to a certain place, and hath no Power to move or act from it self. But some of these Men who cry down *Mysteries* and magnifie Reason, to shew how slender their Pretences to Reason are, have asserted a *Corporeal God*, with *Shape* and *Figure*. It was indeed well thought of by those who would make a *Man* to be *God*: to bring *God* down as near to *Man* as might be. But how to reconcile the Notion of a *Body* with Infinite Perfections, is a *Mystery* to me, and far above my Comprehension. But if it be no *Mystery* to such Men, they must either deny God's Infinite Perfections, or shew how a bodily Shape can be capable of them. But some Men can confound *Finite* and *Infinite*, *Body* and *Spirit*, *God* and *Man*, and yet are for no *Mysteries*; whereas these things are farther from our Reach and Comprehension, than any of those Doctrines which they find fault with. But to proceed:

If we believe *Prophecy*, we must believe *God's fore knowledge of future Events*: For, how could they be foretold if he did not foreknow them? And if he did fore-know those which he did foretell, then it was either because those only were revealed to him which is inconsistent with the Divine Perfections; or that he doth fore-know all other Events and only thought fitting to reveal these: But how can they solve the Difficulties about *Divine Prescience*? Is there no *Mystery* in this? Nothing

above their Comprehension? What then made their great Master deny it, as a thing above his Comprehension? Because nothing can be fore-known but what hath a certain Cause, and therefore, if evil Actions be fore-told God must be the Cause of them, and Men will not be free Agents in them. And yet it is most certain, that the Sufferings of Christ by the Wickedness of Men, were fore-told. What then? Must we make God the Author of Sin? God forbid. Will the righteous Judge of all the Earth, punish Mankind for his own Acts, which they could not avoid? Then we must yield, that there is something in the Manner of the *Divine Prescience*, which is above our Comprehension. And the most searching and inquisitive Men have been forc'd to yield it at last, as to the Connection between the certainty of Prescience and the Liberty of humane Actions. Is it not then much better to sit down quietly at first, adoring the Infiniteness of God's incomprehensible Perfections, than after all the Huffings and Disputings of Men to say, *In ignorantia solâ quietem invenio*, as the great Schoolman did? Surely then, here is something plainly revealed, and yet the Manner of it is still a *Mystery* to us.

Cajetan in  
1. q. 22.  
art. 4.

I shall not now insist on any more of the particular Attributes of God, but only in general I desire to know, whether they believe them to be *finite* or *infinite*? If to be *finite*, then they must have certain Bounds and Limits which they cannot exceed; and that must either be from the Imperfection of Nature, or from a superiour Cause, both which are repugnant to the very Being of God. If they believe them to be *Infinite*, how can they comprehend them? We are strangely puzzled in plain, ordinary, finite things; but it is madness to pretend to comprehend what is *Infinite*; and yet if the Perfections of God be not *Infinite* they cannot belong to Him.

I shall only add, in Consequence to this Assertion, *That if nothing is to be believed, but what may be comprehended*, the very *Being of God* must be rejected too. And therefore I desire all such who talk so warmly against any *Mysteries in Religion* to consider whose Work it is they are doing; even theirs who under this Pretence go about to overthrow all Religion. "For, say they, *Religion is a Mystery* in its own Nature; "not this or that, or the other Religion; but *they are all alike*, all is " *Mystery*; and that is but another Name for *Fraud* and *Imposture*. What " were the *Heathen Mysteries* but tricks of *Priest-Craft*; and such are " maintained and kept up in all kinds of Religion. If therefore these " Men, who talk against *Mysteries* understand themselves, they must " in pursuance of their Principles reject *one God*, as well as *three Per-* " *sons*; For, as long as they believe an *Infinite* and *Incomprehensible* " Being, it is Nonsense to reject any other Doctrine, which relates to an " *Infinite Being*, because it is *Incomprehensible*.

But yet these very Men, who seem to pursue the Consequence of this Principle to the utmost, must assert something more incomprehensible than the *Being of God*. For, I appeal to any Man of common Understanding, whether it be not more agreeable to Reason to suppose Works of Skill, Beauty and Order to be the Effects of a wise and intelligent Being, than of blind Chance and unaccountable Necessity; whether it be not more agreeable to the Sense of Mankind to suppose an *Infinite* and *Eternal Mind* endued with all possible Perfections to be the Maker of this visible World; than, that it should start out from it self, without Contrivance, without Order, without Cause? Certainly such Men have

have no reason to find fault with the *Mysteries of Religion* because they are *incomprehensible*, since there is nothing so absurd and incomprehensible, as their darling *Hypothesis*; and there is nothing which can make it prevail, but to suppose Mankind to be as dull and insensible as the first *Chaos*.

Thus I have shewn that it is not unreasonable for *God* to require from us the Belief of something which we cannot comprehend.

(2.) I now come to consider, whether those who are so afraid of *incomprehensible Mysteries* in our *Faith*, have made it so much more easie in the Way they have taken. And notwithstanding all the Hectoring talk against *Mysteries* and things incomprehensible in Religion, I find more insuperable Difficulties in Point of Reason in their Way than in ours. As for instance,

(1.) It is a more reasonable thing to suppose something *mysterious* in the Eternal Son of *God's being with the Father before the World was made by him*? (as *St. John* expresses it in the beginning of his Gospel) than in supposing that although *John the Baptist* were born six Months before *Jesus Christ*; that yet *Christ* was in Dignity before him. What a wonderful *Mystery* is this? Can Men have the Face to cry down *Mysteries* in deep Speculations, and matters of a high and abstruse Nature, when they make such *Mysteries* of plain and easie things? and suppose the *Evangelist* in profound Language and lofty Expressions to prove a thing, which was never disputed, *viz.* that although *Christ Jesus* were born six Months after *John*, yet he was in Dignity before him?

(2.) It is a more reasonable thing to suppose that a *Divine Person* should assume humane Nature, and so the *Word to be made Flesh*; than to say, that an Attribute of *God*, his *Wisdom* or *Power* is *made Flesh*, which is a *Mystery* beyond all Comprehension; There may be some Difficulties in our Conception of the other, but this is a thing beyond all Conception or Imagination; for an *Accident* to be made a *Substance* is as absurd, as to imagine it to *subsist* without one.

(3.) It is more reasonable to suppose that the Son of *God* should come down from *Heaven* and take our Nature upon him, than that a *Man* should be wrapt up into *Heaven*, that it might be said that he came down from thence. For in the former Supposition we have many other Places of Scripture to support it, which speak of his *being with God*, and *having Glory with him before the World was*; whereas there is nothing for the other, but only that it is necessary to make some tolerable Sense of those words.

(4.) It is more reasonable to believe that *God* should become *Man* by taking our Nature upon him, than that *Man* should become *God*. For in the former, there is nothing but the Difficulty of conceiving the manner of the Union, which we all grant to be so between Soul and Body; but in the other there is a Repugnancy in the very Conception of a *Created God*, of an *Eternal Son of Adam*, of *Omnipotent Infirmit*y, of an *Infinite finite Being*. In the former Case, an *Infinite* is united to a *Finite*; but in the other a *Finite* becomes *Infinite*.

(5.) It is more reasonable to believe that *Christ Jesus* should suffer as he did *for our sakes* than *for his own*. We are all agreed that the *Sufferings* of *Christ* were far beyond any thing he deserved at *God's* Hands; but what Account then is to be given of them? We say that he made himself a voluntary Sacrifice for Expiation of the Sins of Mankind; and so there was a great and noble End designed, and no Injury done to a  
willing

willing Mind; and the *Scripture* as plainly expresses this, as it can do in Words. But others deny this, and make him to suffer as one wholly Innocent; for what Cause? To make the most innocent Persons as apprehensive of suffering as the most guilty; and the most righteous God to put no Difference between them, with respect to Suffering?

(6.) It is more reasonable to suppose such a Condescension in the Son of God to take upon him the Form of a Servant for our Advantage; than that a *meer Man* should be exalted to the Honour and *Worship* which belongs only to God. For, on the one side, there is nothing but what is agreeable to the Divine Nature, viz. *Infinite Love* and *Condescension* and *Pity* to Mankind; on the other, there is the greatest Design of *Self-exaltation* that ever was in *Humane Nature*, viz. for a *meer Man* to have the most *Essential Attributes* and *Incommunicable Honour* which belongs to God. And whether of these two is more agreeable to the Spirit and Design of the New-Testament, let any Man of understanding judge. For as it is evident, that the great Intention of it is to magnify the wonderful Love of God in the sending of his Son; so it is as plain that one great End of the Christian Doctrine was to take Mankind off from giving Divine Worship to Creatures; and can we then suppose that at the same time it should set up the *Worship* of a *meer Man* with all the Honour and Adoration which belongs to God? This is to me an *incomprehensible Mystery* indeed, and far beyond all that is implied in the *Mysteries* of the *Trinity* and *Incarnation*. For it subverts the very Foundation of the Design of Christianity as to the reforming *Idolatry* then in Being; it lays the Foundation for introducing it into the World again; for since the Distance between God and his Creatures is taken away, in the matter of Worship, there is nothing left but the Declaration of his Will; which doth not exclude more *Mediators* of *Intercession* but upon this Ground, that the *Mediation* of *Redemption* is the Foundation of that of *Intercession*. And it is far more easie for us to suppose there may be some things too hard for us to understand in the *Mystery* of our *Redemption* by *Jesus Christ*, than that at the same time it should be both a *Duty* and a *Sin* to worship any but the *true God* with proper Divine Worship. For if it be *Idolatry* to give it to a Creature, then it is a great Sin; for so the *Scripture* still accounts it; but if we are bound to give it to Christ who is but a Creature, then that which in it self is a Sin, is now become a necessary Duty; which overthrows the natural Differences of Good and Evil, and makes *Idolatry* to be a *meer Arbitrary* thing. And I take it for granted, that in matters of Religion, *Moral Difficulties* are more to be regarded than *Intellectual*; because Religion was far more designed for a Rule of our Actions, than for the Satisfaction of our Curiosity. And upon due Examination we shall find that there is no such frightful Appearances of Difficulties in the *Mystery* of the *Incarnation*, as there is in giving *Divine Worship* to a *Creature*.

And it ought to be observed that those very Places which are supposed to exclude Christ from being the *true God*; must, if they have any force, exclude him from *Divine Worship*. For they are spoken of God as the *Object* of our *Worship*; but if he be not excluded from *Divine Worship*, then neither is he from being the *true God*; which they grant he is by *Office* but not by *Nature*.

But a *God* by *Office* who is not so by *Nature* is a new and *incomprehensible Mystery*. A *Mystery* hidden from *Ages* and *Generations* as to the Church of God; but not *made known* by the *Gospel* of his Son. This

Joh. 17. 3.  
1 Cor. 6. 6.  
Socin. ad  
Eutrop. p.  
96.  
c. Wick.  
c. 11.  
Catech.  
Racov.  
p. 65.

This is such a kind of *Mystery* as the *Heathen Priests* had; who had *Gods many and Lords many*, as the *Apostle* saith, *i. e. many by Office* 1 Cor. 8. 5. although but *one by Nature*. But if the *Christian Religion* had owned *one God by Nature* and only *one by Office*, the *Heathens* had been to blame chiefly in the *Number of their Gods by Office*, and not in the *Divine Worship* which they gave to them. But *St. Paul* blames the *Heathens* for *doing Service to them which by Nature are no Gods*; not for doing it Gal. 4. 8. without *Divine Authority*, nor for mistaking the *Person* who was *God by Office*, but in giving *Divine Worship* to them who *by Nature were no Gods*; which he could never have said, if by the *Christian Doctrine*, *Divine Worship* were to be given to one who was not *God by Nature*.

But these are indeed *incomprehensible Mysteries* how a *Man by Nature* can be a *God really and truly by Office*; how the *incommunicable Perfections of the Divine Nature* can be communicated to a *Creature*; how *God* should *give his glory to another*, and by his own *Command* require that to be given to a *Creature* which himself had absolutely forbidden to be given to any besides himself. It is said by a famous *Jesuit* (I will not say how agreeably to their own *Doctrines* and *Practices* about *Divine Worship*) that the *Command of God* cannot make him worthy of *Divine* Smiglec. de Divin. Verb. Incarn. Nat. p. 45. *Worship*, who without such a *Command* is not worthy of it. And it is *very absurd* to say, that he that is unworthy of it without a *Command*, can become worthy by it; for it makes *God* to command *Divine Honour* to be given to *one who cannot deserve it*. (For no meer *Man* can deserve to be made *God*.) Nova Monstra, &c. p. 42. But it is more agreeable to the *Divine Nature and Will* not to give his *Honour* to a *Creature*.

(3.) But after all the *Invectives* of these *Enemies to Mysteries*, we do not make that which we say is *Incomprehensible* to be a *Necessary Article of Faith* as it is *Incomprehensible*; but we do assert that what is *Incomprehensible* as to the *Manner*, may be a *Necessary Article* as far as it is plainly revealed. As in the *Instances* I have already mentioned of the *Creation* and *Resurrection of the Dead*; would they in earnest have *Men* turn *Infidels* as to these things till they are able to comprehend all the *Difficulties* which relate to them? If not, why should this suggestion be allow'd as to the *Mysteries* which relate to our *Redemption* by *Jesus Christ*? If it be said, *the Case is not alike for those are clearly revealed and these are not*; this brings it to the true and proper *Issue* of this *Matter*, and if we do not prove a *clear Revelation*, we do not assert their being *Necessary Articles of Faith*; but my present business was only to take off this *Objection* that the *Mysteries* were *incomprehensible* and therefore not to be received by us.

II. And so I come to the second *Way*, by which, we are to examine the several *Senses of Christ Jesus coming to save Sinners*: Which of them tends more to the *Benefit and Advantage of Mankind*; or which is *more worthy of all Acceptation*.

And that will appear by considering these things;

(1.) Which tends most to the raising our *Esteem* and *Love* of *Christ Jesus*.

(2.) Which tends most to the begetting in us a greater *Hatred* of *Sin*.

(3.) Which tends most to the strengthening our *Hope* of *Salvation* by *Jesus Christ*.

(1.) As

(1.) As to the raising in us a greater *Esteem* and *Love of Christ*. We are certain that the Infinite Love and Condescension of *Christ Jesus* in undertaking such a Work as *the saving of Sinners* makes it most worthy of all Acceptation. Some Men may please themselves in thinking that by taking away all *Mysteries* they have made their *Faith* more easie, but I am certain they have extremely lessen'd the Argument for our *Love*, viz. the Apprehensions of the wonderful Love and Condescension of *Christ* in coming into the World *to save Sinners*. And yet this is the great Argument of the New Testament to perswade Mankind to the *Love of God* and of his Son: *God so loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son, &c.* This is indeed a mighty Argument of Love, if by the *only begotten Son* be meant the Eternal Son of God, *who came down from Heaven*, as *St. John* speaks just before; but if no more be meant but only that God made a *meer Man* to be his Son, and after he had preached a while here on Earth and was ill used and crucified by his own People, he exalted him to be *God* and gave him Divine Attributes and Honours; this were an Argument of great Love to the Person of *Christ*, but not to the rest of Mankind. But *God's Love* in Scripture is magnified with respect to *the World* in the sending of his Son. In this was manifested, saith the Apostle, *the Love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the World that we should live through him.* Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a Propitiation for our Sins. The great Love we still see is towards us, i. e. towards Mankind, but according to the other Sense it must have been, herein was the Love of God manifested to his Son, that for his Sufferings he exalted him above all Creatures. He that spared not his own Son, saith *St. Paul*, but deliver'd him up for us all. If he were the *Eternal Son of God* who came to suffer for us; there is a mighty Force and *Emphasis* in this Expression, and very apt to raise our Admiration and our Love; but what *not sparing his own Son* is there, if nothing were meant but that he designed by Sufferings to exalt him? For *not sparing him* supposes an Antecedent Relation of the highest Kindness, but the other is only designing extraordinary Kindness for the sake of his Sufferings. Therefore, the Argument for the *Love of God* is taken from what his *Son* was, when he deliver'd him up for us all; he was his *own Son*; not by *Adoption* as others are; *St. John* calls him his *only begotten Son*; and God himself, *his beloved Son* in the Voice from Heaven; and this before his Sufferings, immediately after his Baptism, when as yet, there was nothing extraordinary done by him, as to the great Design of his coming. Which shews, that there was an Antecedent Relation between him and the Father; and that therein the Love of God and of *Christ* was manifested, that being the *only begotten Son of the Father*, he should take our Nature upon him, and for our sakes do and suffer what he did. This is indeed an Argument great enough to raise our Admiration, to excite our Devotion, to inflame our Affections; but how flat and low doth it appear, when it comes to no more than this, that there was a *Man*, whom, after his Sufferings *God* raised from the Dead and made him a *God by Office*? Doth this carry any such Argument in it for our Esteem and Love and Devotion to him as the other doth upon the most serious Consideration of it?

(2.) Which tends most to beget in us a greater *Hatred of Sin*. For that is so contrary to the Way of our *Salvation* by *Jesus Christ*, that what

what tends most to our *Hatred* of it, must conduce most to our Happiness; and therefore be *most worthy of all Acceptation*. It is agreed on all hands, that *Christ* did suffer very much both in his Mind and in his Body. In his Mind, when it is said, *that he was troubled in Spirit*; Joh. 13. 27. that *he began to be sorrowful and very heavy*; and soon after, *My Soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*. Matth 26. 37, 38. St. *Luke* saith, *that he was in an Agony*; wherein he not only *prayed more earnestly, but his sweat was as it were great drops of Blood falling to the Ground*. Mark 14. 33, 34. What made this *A-mazement*, and dreadfull *Agony* in the Mind of the most innocent Person in the World? Was it merely the Fear of the Pains of Death which he was to undergo? That is impossible, considering the Assurance which he had of so glorious a Reward so soon following after; when so many Martyrs endured such exquisite Torments for his sake without any such Disturbance or Consternation. But the Apostles give us another Account of it. St. *Peter*, saith he was *to bear our Sins in his own body on the tree*; that *Christ* suffer'd for Sins, *the just for the unjust*. 1 Pet. 2. 24. St. *Paul*, that *God* made him to be *Sin for us who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him*. 3. 18. Hereby we understand how so innocent a Person came to suffer; *he stood in our stead*; *he was made Sin for us*; and therefore was to be treated as a Sinner; and to suffer that on our Account, which he could not deserve on his own. 2 Cor. 5. 21. If he suffer'd on his own Account, this were the way to fill our Minds with perplexity concerning the Justice of Providence with respect to his dealings with the most innocent and holy Persons in this World; if he suffer'd on our Account, then we have the Benefit of his Sufferings, and therein we see how displeasing to God sin is, when even his own Son suffer'd so much by taking the guilt of our Sins upon him. And what can tend more to the begetting in us a due hatred of sin, than to consider what *Christ* himself suffer'd on the Account of it? What can make us have more dreadfull thoughts of it, than that the great and mercifull God, when he designed to *save Sinners*, yet would have his own Son to become a *Propitiation for the Sins of Mankind*? And unless we allow this, we must put force upon the plainest Expressions of *Scripture*; and make *Christ* to suffer meerly to shew God's Power over a most innocent Person, and his Will and Pleasure to inflict the most severe Punishment without any Respect to Guilt. And surely such a Notion of *God*, cannot be *worthy of all Acceptation*.

(3.) Which tends most to strengthen our *Hope of Salvation by Christ Jesus*. If we believe that he suffer'd for our Sins, then we have great Reason to hope for the forgiveness of them; although they have been many and great, if we sincerely repent; because the most prevailing Argument for Despair will be removed; which is taken from the *Justice of God*, and his declared *Hatred of Sin* and *Displeasure* against *Sinners*. If God be so much in earnest displeas'd with the Sins of Mankind, and his Justice be concerned in the Punishment of Sinners, how can they ever hope to escape, unless there be a way for his Displeasure to be removed, and his Justice to be satisfied? And this the *Scripture* tells us is done by *Christ*, who died that he might be a *Sacrifice of At-* Rom. 5. 10. *tonement to reconcile us to God by his Death*; as St. *Paul* expressly affirms. 1 Cor. 5. 19. And by this means, we may have strong Consolation from the Hopes of Forgiveness of our Sins. Whereas, if this be taken away, either Men must believe that *God* was not in earnest displeas'd with the Sins of Mankind; which must exceedingly lessen our Esteem of the *Holiness* Heb. 9. 15.

and *Justice of God* ; or if he were so displeas'd, that he laid aside this Displeasure, without any *Atonement* or *Sacrifice of Expiation*. And so, as many as look on *God's Justice* and *Holiness* as necessary and essential Attributes of God, will be in danger of sinking into the Depths of Despair, as often as they reflect seriously on the Guilt of their Sins. But on the other side, if we believe that while we were *Enemies*, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son ; then we may have Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ; and have Reason to believe that there will be no *Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus* by a lively Faith and sincere Repentance ; then they may with Comfort look up to God as a reconciled Father, through *Jesus Christ our Mediatour* ; then they may with inward Satisfaction look beyond the Grave, and stedfastly hope for that Salvation which Christ purchas'd on Earth and will at last bestow on all such as love and obey him. To which God of his Infinite Mercy bring us all through *Jesus Christ*. For, *This is a faithful Saying and worthy of all Acceptation, that he came into the World to save Sinners.*

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# SERMON XXIX.

Preached before the

# QUEEN

A T

# WHITE-HALL,

March 1<sup>st</sup>. 169<sup>o</sup>.

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St. LUKE VI. 46.

*And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*

**T**Hese few Words contain in them a smart and serious *Expostulation* of our Blessed Saviour, with such who professed great Kindness to him in their Words, but shew'd no regard to his Commands. They owned him to be the *Messias*, and depended upon him for their Happiness, and were willing enough to be known to be his Disciples and Followers, but yet his Doctrine made little Impression on their Minds, and scarce any Alteration in the Course of their Lives. They loved to be where Christ was, to hear his Doctrine, to see his Miracles, to observe his Conversation, to admire what he did and said; but herein lay the whole of their Religion; for although they *named the name of Christ*, and it may be rejoiced and glory'd in it, yet *they did not depart from iniquity*. Now, considering the Circumstances of that time, this seems to have been an unaccountable kind of Hypocrisie. For their calling Christ *Lord, Lord*, spoiled their Interest in this World; and *not doing what he said*, debarr'd them from the hopes of Happiness by him in another. For, if they own'd him to be their *Lord*, they were bound to believe him in what he declared; and there is nothing he doth more expressly warn men of, than hoping to be saved by him without obeying his Commands. *Not every one that saith Mat. 7. 21. unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heven.* Which is shorter expressed,

fed, but to the same purpose here by St. Luke; *And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* As though he had said “to them, “It is in vain to think to please and flatter me with your Words, when your Actions are disagreeable to them. To call me *Lord, Lord,* is to own my *Authority* in commanding you; but to do this, and yet wilfully to disobey me, is to shew your Hypocrisie and Folly together.

Luk. 13.  
26.

v. 27.

Which *Expostulation* of Christ was not confined to that time, no more than his *Commands* were; but it hath always the same Force, where Persons are guilty of the same Folly. For although now none can plead for themselves, as they did, *We have eaten and drank in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets;* yet we may build as presumptuous hopes upon Privileges of another kind, which may be as ineffectual to our Salvation, as these were when Christ said to those very Persons, *Depart from me all ye workers of Iniquity.* We all bear the Name of Christ, and own his Doctrine, and partake of his Sacraments; and in one of them profess *to eat and drink in his Presence,* and at his Table, and renew our solemn Baptismal Vow and Covenant with him as our Lord and Saviour; and so we pray to him and profess to depend upon him for our Salvation; and therefore we are as deeply concerned in the Scope and Design of these Words, as ever the *Jews* were to whom our Saviour spake them.

But that I may the better apply them to the Consciences of all those who hear me this Day, and to make my Discourse more useful and practical, I shall single out some of the most Remarkable Instances of those Duties, which Christ hath enjoined to his Disciples of all Ages and Nations; and then shew how just and reasonable it is that all who call Christ *Lord, Lord,* should *do what he saith* about them; and yet that the Generality of all those who do so, do very little mind or regard them.

The main part of those Duties which Christ requires from all his Disciples may be reduced to these three Heads:

- I. Such as relate to the *Government of our Passions.*
- II. To the *Government of our Speech.*
- III. To the *Government of our Actions;* so, as that we lead a *sober, righteous and godly Life.*

I. As to the *Government of our Passions.* And that may be considered three ways.

1. As to the things which are apt to *Provoke* us.
2. As to the things which are apt to *Tempt* us.
3. As to the things which *Concern* us, in respect of our Condition in this World.

(1.) As to the things which are apt to *Provoke* us. Such is the frame of human Nature, that we are very tender and sensible not only of any real Hurt or Injury which may be done to our Bodies or Estates, but of any thing we apprehend may do so, or that touches upon our Reputation. And where the Injury is real, yet that which often touches most to the quick, is the *Contempt* which is expressed in it. For, if the same thing be done by one, we are satisfied did it not out of any Unkindness or Ill-will, the matter is easily passed over, and makes no breach or difference between them. But, if it be intended for an Affront,

front, although it be never so little, then the brisker mens Spirits are, and the higher Opinion they have of themselves, so much deeper Impression is presently made in the Mind; and that inflames the Heart and puts the Blood and Spirits into a quicker Motion in order to the returning the Affront on him that gave it. But there is a considerable difference in Mens Tempers to be observed; some are very quick and hasty, others are slower in the beginning, but more violent afterwards; the Passions of the former are like a Flash of Gunpowder, which begins suddenly, makes a great Noise and is soon over; but the other are like a burning Fever, which is lower at first, but rises by degrees, till the whole Body be in a Flame. The one is more troublesome, but the other more dangerous; the Care of the one must be in the beginning; of the other in the continuance of Passion, lest it turn into Hatred, Malice and Revenge. But what through the Natural Heat of Temper in some, the Jealousie and Suspicion in others, the crossing each others Designs and Inclinations, the misconstruction of Words and Actions, the Carelesness of some and the Forwardness and Peevishness of others, Mankind are apt to lead very uneasy Lives with respect to one another; and must do so unless they look after the Government of themselves as to real or imaginary Provocations:

There are two Things I shall therefore speak to.

(1.) That it is Reasonable that a Restraint should be laid on Mens violent Passions.

(2.) That Christ hath laid no Unreasonable Restraint upon them.

(1.) That it is Reasonable that a Restraint should be laid on mens violent Passions. And that on a twofold Account.

(1.) With Respect to the common Tranquility of humane Life.

(2.) To the particular Tranquility of our own Minds.

(1.) To the common Tranquility of humane Life. The great Comfort and Pleasure of it depends on the mutual benefit Men have from Society with one another. This cannot be enjoy'd without particular Persons abridging themselves of some natural Rights for a common Benefit. If we could suppose no such thing as Government or Society among men, we must suppose nothing but Disorder and Confusion; every one being his own Judge and Executioner too in case of any apprehended Wrong or Injury done to him. Which condition of Life having all imaginable Uneasiness attending it, by perpetual Fears and Jealousies and Mistrusts of one anothers Powers, there was a Necessity that they must come to some common terms of Agreement with each other; so as to fix their Rights and to establish a just Measure of Proceeding in case of Wrong. For every Man's Revenging his own Injury according to his own Judgment, was one of those great Inconveniencies, which was to be remedied by Society, Laws and Government. And Mankinds entering into Society for this End, doth suppose it possible for them to keep under their violent Passions; and to submit their private Injuries to the equal Arbitration of Laws; or else they are made to no purpose, unless it be to punish men for what they cannot avoid. For many of those Crimes which all the Laws of Mankind do punish, as wilfull Murder, may be committed through the force of a violent Passion; and if that be irresistible, then the Laws which punish it are not founded on Reason and Justice. But if such Laws are very Just and Reasonable, as no doubt they are, then all Mankind are agreed that mens violent Passions may and ought to be restrained in some Cases. The only Dispute then remaining is, whether it may not be as fitting to  
restrain

restrain our Passions in such Cases, which the Law takes no notice of. For, there is a Superiour Law, *viz.* that of Reason whereby we are to be Governed; and the Publick Laws do not forbid or punish Offences because they are unreasonable, but because they are dangerous and hurtfull to humane Society. And if it be allow'd to be fitting and necessary for men to keep their Passions within the Compass of Laws, why not within the Conduct of Reason? Especially, when a great deal of Disorder may happen, and disturbance of the Peace and Quiet of human Society, by the Violence of Passions, which may be out of the Reach of human Laws. And every man is bound by vertue of his being in Society, to preserve the Tranquility of it as much as he can.

(2.) The Tranquility of our own Minds depends upon it. And certainly, that is a very reasonable Motive for the Government of our Passions, since those are the Occasions of all the Storms and Tempests within our Breasts. For the Government of Reason is calm, even and serene, full of Peace and all the Blessings which follow it; but the Government of Passion is tyrannical and boisterous, uncertain and troublesome; never free from doing Mischief to it self or others. The greatest Pleasure of Passion is Revenge; and yet that is so unnatural, so full of anxiety and fear of the Consequents of it, that he who can subdue this unruly Passion hath more real Pleasure and Satisfaction in his mind, than he who seeks to gratifie it most. For, if he be disappointed, then he must be uneasy by failing of his end; if he be not, then he is tormented with the Apprehensions of what may follow it. So that there is nothing which conduces more to the greatest Blessing of Life, the Tranquility of our Minds, than the Government of our Passions doth.

(2.) Let us now see, whether our Saviour hath laid any Unreasonable Restraint upon our Passions.

There are Three things he particularly requires in order to the Government of them.

(1.) *Meekness.* (2.) *Patience.* (3.) *Love of Enemies.* And I hope to make it appear, that there is nothing unreasonable in any of these.

(1.) *Meekness.* Which is such a Gentleness of Temper, as makes a man not easie to be provoked. There is a great deal of difference between *Meekness* and *Stupidity*; the one arises from a natural Dulness and Insensibility; the other from a fixed, calm and composed Temper of Mind; and is founded on two, which are both wise things, especially when they go together; and those are, *Consideration* and *Resolution*. For, nothing tends to the abating the heat and violence of Passion so much, as *Consideration* doth, and *Resolution* makes it effectual. If it were nothing but the time it gives, that is of great force for letting out the inward Fermentation, which will spend it self in great measure, if Vent be given to it. Whereas, if it be kept in and suffer'd to work upon it self, it turns from a hasty Passion to Malice and Revenge. But *Consideration* is of greater Use, as it suggests Arguments from Reason to quell and allay the sudden heat of Passions; as, That it exposes the Weakness of our Minds, in not being able to keep under that which they ought to Govern and have Power to Command; That it is a great folly to disorder our selves, at the Pleasure of our Enemies; or, at such Accidents, which we can neither prevent, nor remove; That the wisest thing we can do, is not to betray our Folly to others, if we cannot wholly suppress it in our selves; That

we weaken the Reins of the Government of our selves, by not holding them with a stricter hand; and make our Passions more seditious and turbulent by letting them alone; That the more we try to command our selves the easier we shall do it; That our most rebellious Passions will submit, if they find we are in earnest; That it is the way to make that a real Injury by being disturbed, which would lose its force by being neglected; That while we are true to our selves, we are out of the reach of our Enemies, and then we are most under their Power, when we are least under our own; That the great work of Religion lies within us; and that we are in a very ill condition if neither Reason nor Religion can keep us in order. By such *Considerations* as these, men are brought to a more calm and composed Temper, which is that *Meekness* which our Saviour requires. And to this he seems to appropriate the Happiness of this Life. *Blessed are the Meek for they shall inherit the earth.* Mat. 5. 5. What doth our Blessed Saviour mean by *Inheriting the Earth*? Is there any thing like *Blessedness* to be expected in this troublesome and sinfull World? Not Absolutely; but Comparatively there may; and if there be any thing like it to be had here, the *meek* may put in for the largest share of it. For they have more Friends and fewer Enemies than the rest of the World; they enjoy themselves with more quietness and satisfaction, and are less disturbed at the Noise and tumultuous Passions of the rest of mankind. O happy Temper? To be calm and easie and in good humour in the midst of Disorders and Provocations. To enjoy the Peace and Serenity of the Regions above, in the midst of the Storms and Tempests here below; To raise the Mind above the power of Detraction; and thereby to suffer the Venom of malicious Tongues to scatter and disperse it self in the open Air, if it doth not return to the Breasts of those from whom it came. St. James might Jam. 1. 13. therefore well call it the *Meekness of Wisdom*, not only because Wisdom directs it, but that it consists very much in the Exercise of it.

2. *Patience.* For let Persons be endued with the *Spirit of Meekness*, yet the World is so froward and hard to be pleased, so captious and ill-natured, so ready to apprehend an Injury and to revenge it, that there is great need of *Patience*, not only in *bearing* the Troubles of Life, but in *forbearing* to return *evil for evil*. And this is that which our Saviour particularly requires of his Disciples. He strictly forbids all *Causeless Anger*, all *Contumelious* and *Reproachful Words*; and when Injuries are done us, he commands us *that we resist not evil; but if one smite us on the right Cheek, to turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the Law and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak also. And whosoever will compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.* Matth. 5. 22. v. 39. v. 40. v. 41. Now here lies a real Difficulty; for this seems to go beyond the bounds of humane Patience: To pass by Affronts without taking notice of them; not to resent the Injuries of those whom no Kindness can oblige, seems to be a great degree of Vertue; and it is so; but to bind hand and foot when we receive them, to invite them to do more, and to offer our selves to double the proportion, seems wholly unaccountable to Reason, and inconsistent with the Wisdom of *Christianity*.

The true Account of the meaning of these Commands is this; Our Saviour takes it for granted, that all considerable matters of Right and Wrong were determined by Laws; as the most equal Measures between Parties; and these he meddled not with; For, saith he, to one that desired him to interpose in such a matter; *Who made me a Judge or a Divider* Luke 12. 14.

*vider among you?* Therefore he doth not abridge his Followers from making use of these Laws and Courts of Judicature, which are established for matters of common Justice and Equity; but all the Laws in the World cannot alter the Temper of some mens minds, who are peevish and quarrelsome, who are provoked on any slight Occasion, and it may be are provoked if you gave them none. Like the *Roman Orator, Seneca* mentions, who was angry with every one that came near him; and when a Client sought to humour him in every thing, he was at last angry with him, because he did not provoke him. There are some Tempers so easily provoked, and yet so hard to be reconciled, as if their Original Sin did not lie in *Concupiscence* but in *Ill-Nature*. And yet, even that is a kind of *Concupiscence*; for the *Stoicks* defined Anger by *Libido*; and said it was a *Lust of Revenge*; and so far seem'd more unreasonable than that of *Intemperance*; because this aims only at Pleasure, in things which are apt to produce it, (however mean and unreasonable) but the other is an extravagant and unnatural Pleasure, which arises from anothers Pain; and differs from the other, as the Pleasures of evil Spirits do from those of Brutes.

But if we happen to converse among such who take Pleasure in doing us Injuries upon every slight Occasion, by some personal Affronts, or litigious Suits, or unjust Exactions in ordinary Cases; what are we to do? May we not right our selves by retaliating the Injury upon them? Since the Law of *Moses* did allow of *Retaliation* in case of real Injuries, *an Eye for an Eye, a Tooth for a Tooth*; and so by an equitable Construction of the Law, it may extend to personal Affronts. Thus the *Jews* indeed understood it; but if our *Saviour* had allow'd their Interpretation, he would never have said, *But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil*. There was a *Spirit of Revenge* in them, so as they would pass by no kind of Injuries, although thy were such, which the Law had made no provision for; and this our *Saviour* condemns. But here comes a hard Case to be resolv'd; not so in it self, but the Custom of the World hath made it so; for when a mistaken Notion of *Honour* and *Conscience* come in Competition, it is not an easie thing to forgo *Honour* for *Conscience* sake. The Case is, concerning *Contumelious Words* and *Personal Affronts*, which are given to Men of Honour. Is it unlawful for them to right themselves according to the receiv'd Customs among them, when the Law takes no notice of such Injuries, and so seems to leave it to them? This is the Case; and I have put it as fair as the thing will bear. I might say in general that our *Saviour* makes no distinction of Mens Honour and Quality in his Commands; and that for all that I can see, such must be saved on the same terms with others; That *Honour* is but an imaginary thing when it stands in Competition with the Rule of *Conscience*; and that no Custom is to be observed against *Reason* and *Religion*: But here lies the insuperable Difficulty; how the exposing one anothers Lives for the sake of *Reproachfull Words* or *Personal Affronts*, can be reconciled to this Command of Christ? For my part, I cannot see how it is possible to do it; since in this Case, there is a studied and premeditated Design of Revenge in the Case of such Injuries which are here mention'd; and that of the highest Nature, and beyond any Proportion between the Offence and the Punishment, which all men out of Passion, think, in common Justice ought to be consider'd. I know some *Casuits* in the *Church of Rome*, allow it to be lawfull to take away the Lives of any who give them *Contumelious Words*;

*Words*; but these have been condemned as very loose *Casuits*; and they have found out a subtle way of *directing the Intention*, whereby to keep from breaking the Laws of Christ; but this is too subtle to be reconciled with the Plainness of his Laws; and they all deny it to be lawfull by way of Revenge. Others say much better, that although *Nature* may seem to give an injured Person a Right to vindicate himself by the best means he can; yet that Right is so restrained and limited by Christ's Commands in this case, that it is by no means lawful for *Christians* to use it; and to pretend to do it for a Reparation of Honour, *à ratione & pietate valdè alienam videtur, is repugnant both to Reason and Religion*; Gr. de J. B. & P. l. 2. 1. 10. faith one, who very well understood the Rules of both.

But all the pretended *Right of Nature* is taken away by *Laws*, and where those declare it to be *Wilful Murder* to take away the Life of another on such Accounts as these, there is no colour left for natural right, which supposes no determination by *Laws*.

I confess it requires a more than ordinary Degree of *Christian Fortitude* as well as *Patience*, to be able to despise such a prevailing Custom. But if men hope to be saved by Christ, they must observe his Commands; and if they once declare, that they are resolved to do so in this particular, (if they do the same in all others) it will be then thought to be Conscience and not Cowardice for them to decline a Challenge; and that upon good Grounds they decline such a Custom, which no good man could ever approve, nor any wise man defend.

3. *Love of Enemies*. This seemsto be harder yet. Is it not enough to bear them; but must we love them too? Yes, Christ hath strictly required it.

But I say unto you, *Love your Enemies*; and again in this very Chapter, Luk 6. 27. *But love your Encmies*. If he had bid Men love their Friends and 35. take heed of their Enemies, there are some Ages of the World, wherein this had been no impertinent Advice. But how can those be supposed to love their Enemies, who hardly love any thing but themselves? Self-Opinion, Self-Will, Self-Interest prevail over the far greatest part of Mankind; I wish I could not say, even among those who call Christ *Lord, Lord*. But Self-Love as natural as it is, must be artificially disguised; for, if it appears too openly, it meets with so much Self-Love in others, that it will not be easily born. Therefore the most crafty Lovers of themselves, if they design to have the Love of others, must conceal their inward Passion. For, he that appears to set up himself, is certain to make the rest of Mankind his Enemies; for, even those who would do the same, will be the most displeas'd with those who do it. Therefore the most certain way to honour and universal esteem, is to mind the Good of others more than our own; to be Just and Charitable and Kind to all; and to oblige as many as we can, without Partiality or Prejudice. And this, I say, is that *Love of Enemies* which our Saviour requires, which doth not suppose the same kind of Affection to them which we have to our Friends, for that is grounded on mutual Love and Good-will to each other; which, if we suppose in Enemies, we suppose a Contradiction; for that is to suppose them not to be Enemies, but Friends. What then is it which our Saviour means? It is certainly an Universal Charity, or a Readiness of Mind to do good to all, although they have personally provoked, or injured us. And so Christ himself explains it, by doing good to our Enemies, Luk 6. 27. 33. 35. praying for them and relieving them in their Necessities; and he pro-

poses the best Example in the World for our imitation; and that of God himself, *who maketh his Sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.* But none can suppose that the righteous and holy God, can have the same Love or Kindness for the Evil, which he hath for the Good, or for the Unjust, which he hath for the Just. So that this Precept, which being misunderstood, seems to be irreconcilable to humane Nature, contains in it, nothing but what all Mankind approve in others, as unwilling as they are to practise it themselves.

And now it is time to make a stand, and to look about us, for, I have gone through our Saviour's Commands with respect to the things which are apt to *provoke* us. And where are those *Christians* to be found, who do what Christ hath said herein, who do yet every day call him *Lord, Lord*? If Peevishness and Frowardness, perpetual Uneasiness and Discontent; if Rancor and Bitterness, Strife and Envy, Faction and Animosity; if Impatience of apprehended Injuries, and the making of Enemies, instead of *loving them*, were the Marks of good Christians, we should find Number enough, even among those who pretend to Reformation. We profess to thank God for a late great Deliverance from the hands of our *Enemies*, I mean as to our *Religion*; (and truly there appears more and more Reason for it, since it is so much more evident that the Design was no less than a total Subversion of our Religion.)

But what a sad requital is this, for so great Mercies, to break out into *Factions* and *Parties*, instead of pursuing the common Interest of our Religion; instead of laying aside Differences about Religion, to increase them; nay to make Religion it self not only the Subject of their Quarrels, but of their Scorn and Contempt? What can be said or hoped for, as to such a froward, unthankful, atheistical Generation of Men? Thanks be to God, there are not wanting some extraordinary Examples of true *Piety* and *Goodness* among us; and of *Meekness*, *Patience* and *Universal Charity*; and truly there needs a great deal, to bear up against the daring and insolent *Profaneness* and *Irreligion* of others. When I once see a true Spirit of Reformation prevail among us, not merely as to Doctrines, but as to Mens Lives and Tempers; when I see them more zealous for God and Religion, than for the Interest of particular Parties; when I see them really promoting Peace and Unity, and not making a pretence of it to serve private Ends, I may then hope for a lasting settlement of the true Religion among us. But till then—

(2.) I proceed to the second Head of our Saviour's Commands, and that is as to such things which *Tempt* us. St. James saith, *Every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own Lust and inticed.* Lust is the uncontrolled Desire of sensual Pleasure. Now, as to this, Christ hath laid so strict a Command, as seems very hard for humane Nature to observe. For he not only forbids the Act of *Adultery*, but the Tendencies to it; *viz.* the *Impurity* of the inward *Desires*, and of *Looks* and *Glances*, and makes these to be *Adultery in the Heart*. What is that; For *Adultery* is an outward deliberate Act, and hath *Injustice* as well as *Uncleanness* in it. But *desires* and *looks* are sudden and transient things, which may leave no permanent Effect behind them. However our Saviour, to shew how much God abhors *Impurity*, (who sees into the secret Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart,) declares that the unmortified *Desires* and inward *Lusts* are very displeasing to God; and therefore that those who hope to see God, must be *Pure in Heart*. Which as it implies a sincere Endeavour to suppress all in-



ward Motions which are contrary to it, is both a reasonable and necessary Duty.

But the hardest part of Christ's Commands in this matter, is that which requires us *to pluck out our right eyes, and to cut off our right hands*: Matt. 5. 29, 30. Must the blind and the lame only go to Heaven? But he speaks of such finfull Inclinations in us, which seem as delightfull and usefull to us as to the Pleasures of Life, as *a right Eye* or *a right Hand*; yet we must part with them, if we ever hope to get to Heaven. Not, by any one single Act like *the cutting off a Hand*, or *plucking out an Eye*, but by a serious, constant and sincere Endeavour to mortifie and subdue them. And if this be thought hard, the Consideration of future Happiness and Misery ought to reconcile us to it; and surely it is reasonable we should part with something which is pleasant to us here, for the sake of an infinitely greater Pleasure in another World; since this is only a sensual Pleasure, which cannot be pursued without disturbance of the Mind, and can be enjoy'd but for a little time; and the other is no less than Eternal Felicity of Soul and Body together.

(3.) As to the things which concern us, as to our Condition in this World: There is no Precept of Christ which seems more inconsistent with the Wisdom of this World, than this doth. For, as that lies in taking great care for the future; so our Saviour on the contrary seems to allow none at all. *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your Life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet, for your Body, what ye shall put on.* Matt. 6. 15. Luk. 12. 22. What doth our Saviour mean by this? Would he have all Christians live like the *young Ravens*, meerly upon Providence? Luk. 12. 24. Or, as the *Lilies* of the Field, which grow and flourish and yet neither Job 38. 41. psal. 147. 9. Toil nor Spin? But Man is an intelligent Creature, and apt to forecast and contrive things for his future advantage, and God seems to have left things very much to his own Care and Providence; and generally speaking, Mens Condition in this World is according to it. What then; doth our Saviour indulge Men in a careless, easie, unthinking Life? Or require that his Disciples thoughts ought to be wholly taken up with matters of Religion? Not, if *St. Paul* knew his meaning; for Tim. 5. 8. he saith, *Those who provide not for their own, have denied the Faith and are worse than Infidels.* But this only seems to make the Difficulty greater. Therefore to clear it, we must attend to our Saviour's Scope and Design; which was, to perswade his Disciples *to lay up their Treasure in Heaven, to seek the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness in the first place*; and then represents this World and another as two opposite Interests, so that *one cannot serve two Masters*; which implies a Contradiction to each other. So that what follows must be understood in such a Sense, as is inconsistent with the main Duty, of looking after Heaven as our Happiness; and therefore ought not to be understood of a prudent, necessary Care, but of an anxious, solicitous, distrustfull Care, which implies that we place our Happiness too much here. And therefore *St. Luke* subjoyns these Commands to the Parable of the Rich Man, whose heart was in his Barns and Store-houses, and took great care to lay in Provision enough for a sensual and voluptuous Life: But Luk. 12. 18, 19. to shew the unspeakable Folly of such vain Contrivances, it was said to him, *This night shall thy Soul be required of thee; and then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?* v. 20.

II. I come now to our Saviour's Commands with respect to the *Government of our Speech*. And he seems to be very severe as to this; when he saith; *That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof at the Day of Judgment*. What a heavy Account then, are those to make; whose time is so much taken up with idle and impertinent talk; and who can hardly forbear it, when they should be most serious? Is it unlawful then to speak any more than is just necessary to express our Minds? May we not employ our Speech sometimes for our innocent Diversion and Entertainment, if we keep within the bounds of Prudence and Religion? I do not see that our Saviour forbids it. For the *idle Words* he speaks of there, are profane, false, abusive, malicious Reproaches of Religion and the means to confirm it; as appears by his bringing it just after the mention of the *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*. So that all such Abuses of Speech which entrench on Piety and Good Manners, or Truth and Sincerity, are certainly forbidden by him. But there is one particular Vice of Conversation, which he hath with most force of Argument forbidden; and yet (which is a great shame to any that would be called Christians) none more common among some who would pretend to understand the Methods of Conversation and the best Modes of Speaking; and that is, *the profane Custom of Swearing*. I take it for granted, that all are *Christians* among us, till they disown it themselves; and however men may act, they are not willing to renounce all hopes of Salvation by Christ, I beseech them then to consider, what a Contempt of his Authority is implied in this too fashionable sort of Profaneness? The other Duties I have mentioned, have a great Difficulty in them, as to our Tempers and Inclinations; but nothing of that Nature can be so much as pretended as to this. For no man could ever say, that he had a *Swearing Constitution*, or that it was an *Infirmity* of his *Nature*. There is nothing in it but the Tyranny of a very bad Custom; which every Prudent Man, as well as Good Christian, will see Cause to break. But what a Reproach is it, to the very Profession of Christianity among us, for so plain, so easie a Command of Christ to be broken so commonly, so unconcernedly, so impertinently, as is every day done; and yet they call Christ *Lord, Lord*? In all Ages, there were some pretended Christians, who did not sincerely obey the Commands of our Saviour; but their Hypocrisie was of a finer and more artificial make; this is gross and rude, without the common Respect which is due to the Religion we all profess to be that, we hope to be saved by. Some say, a Custom in it self is no Sin, because it is no Act; but certainly a customary breach of a plain Command is so much greater a Sin, as it implies a greater Contempt of him that made it; and when Custom hath taken away the Sense of the Fault, it is so much more aggravated by it. It is really a matter to be wonder'd at, that among Persons professing a better sort of Breeding, as well as *Christianity*; a vitious Custom, so untempting in it self, so unbecoming the Decency of Conversation, so Affronting to the Divine Majesty, so directly contrary to the Commands of Christ, should get so deep a rooting in ordinary Conversation, that it seems almost impossible to be reformed. But till men do think of breaking off such a Practice as this, I despair of ever seeing them reform, or other things which have a deeper root in their natural Inclinations, and have greater Advantages as to this World.

III. The Commands of Christ extend to the whole Course of our Actions; so, as that we lead *a sober, righteous and godly Life.*

1. As to *Sobriety.* Take heed to your selves, saith Christ, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness. These are somewhat hard words for that which our Age hath learnt to express in much softer terms of *Eating and Drinking well.* Luxury seems a thing quite forgotten to be a Sin, among those who are most guilty of it; and Intemperance thought so uncertain a thing, as though it were impossible to tell when Persons are guilty of it. 'Tis true, that Temperance may vary as to the Degrees and Limits of it; and we do not pretend to define it by Grains and Scruples. But still there ought to be a *Governing our Appetites according to Reason;* and that is Temperance. But what is *Reason* in this Case? Some send us to the Brutes to find out what Reason is; and they tell us, it lies in a plain simple Diet, such as the Beasts use, without provoking or raising the Appetite. But I know not where God hath forbidden the use of Art, as to our Eating and Drinking; and if this were so, we must practice Temperance only in the use of Water and Acorns. If meer *Satisfaction of Nature* were the exact Rule of Temperance, then eating or drinking any thing beyond it were a Sin; which would fill the Minds of those who are afraid to sin, with infinite Scruples; and make all Feasting unlawful. Yet our Saviour was present at one in *Cana of Galilee;* and did a Miracle relating to it. But we need not run into Niceties in this matter; for, *Intemperance* is either an over-charging of Nature, so as to make it sink or totter under the load; or it is a wanton humouring and pleasing the Appetite, not, for the service of Nature, but for the Pleasure of Eating and Drinking; Or, it is as *St. Paul* calls it, making a *God of their belly,* by sacrificing their Time, their Study, their Estates in order to the filling and pleasing of it. Any of these ways, it is no Difficulty to understand what *Intemperance* is; I wish it were as easie to avoid it.

2. As to *Righteousness.* Our Saviour hath given one admirable Rule; which all Persons agree to be of excellent use in all Contracts and Transactions of men with one another; *v. 31. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.* Which is an universal Rule of Justice and Equity, if it be understood of what we would have others to do to us according to Reason, and not according to the Partial Affection we are apt to have to our selves. For this Rule is founded upon the second great Commandment, as our Saviour calls it, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.*

3. As to *Godliness.* He lays the Foundation of that upon the first and great Commandment, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart and with all thy Soul and with all thy Strength.* We need not to question, but where-ever there is such a Love of God, as is here required, there will be true Godliness in all the parts of it. And where this is wanting, all external shews of Devotion want the true Life and Spirit of it. For it is the Love of God which makes all our weak and imperfect Services to be acceptable to him; and without it all our Prayers and our Fastings, and all other appearances of Devotion, are empty and insipid Formalities. Not but that the Acts themselves are commendable; but, they are like a Body without a Soul, dull and heavy; or like the Leaves of a Tree in Autumn, which make a great noise in the Wind, but

but are dry, sapless and soon fall to the Ground. But where the Love of God prevails, it keeps up the Life and Order and Vigour of Devotion; and preserves it from being tainted by hypocrisie, or choaked by the love of this World, or decaying from want of Constancy and Resolution.

Thus I have set before you some of the most remarkable Duties of Christianity; not such as depend on the Opinions and Fancies of men; but such as our Blessed Saviour, the great Lawgiver of his Church, hath made the necessary Conditions of our Salvation by him.

And what now can we say for our selves? We do call Christ *Lord, Lord*; or else we renounce our Baptismal Vow, and all hopes of Salvation by him. But can we say that *we love God*, when we love what he hates, *viz. Sin*? Can we say, *we love him with all our Heart and Soul*, when our Hearts are so much divided between him and the Vanities of this World? Can we say, *we love him with all our Might*, when our Love to God is apt to grow cold and remits upon any apprehension of Difficulties? Can we say, that *we love our Neighbour as our Selves*, when we despise and scorn him, or over-reach and defraud him, or oppress and ruin him? If it go not so far, are we as tender of his Reputation as of our own; as unwilling to see him injured, as ready to help him in his Necessities, as we should desire it from others, if we were in the same Circumstances? If strict Sobriety and Temperance be the Duties of Christians, where are those Virtues to be generally found? I do not speak of particular Persons; but I am afraid, there is hardly such a thing left as a *Sober Party* among us. What profane, customary Swearing is every where to be met with? What Complaints are daily made of the Abounding of all sorts of Wickedness, even to an open Scorn and Contempt, not barely of *Christianity*, but of any kind of *Religion*? For many who have long denied the *Power*, seem to be grown weary of the very *Form of Godliness*; unless it serves some particular End and Design. So that, if we look abroad in the World, we find little Regard shew'd to the Precepts of Christ; and yet those who commit these things call Christ *Lord, Lord*. What is the meaning of all this gross Hypocrisie? Nothing would have been thought more Absurd or Ridiculous, than for one who used no kind of Abstinence, to be thought a *Pythagorean*; or one that indulged his Passions a *Stoick*; or one who eats Flesh and drinks Wine a *Brachman*, or *Banian*. It is really as much for any one to break the known and particular Precepts of Christ, and yet desire to be thought a *Christian*. For, a loose, profane and debauched Christian, is a Contradiction in Morality; it is to be a Christian against Christ, to call him *Lord, Lord*, and yet to despise his Laws and Authority. A Star without Light, a Guide without Eyes, a Man without Reason, a Sun with nothing but Spots, are not more absurd Suppositions, than a Christian without any Grace or Vertue.

But let us say what we will, there are and will be such, who will own Christ and call him *Lord, Lord*, and yet will not part with their sins for him. There were multitudes of such formerly who would lay down their Lives for the Ground he trod on, and yet would not mortifie one Sin for his sake. The Reason is still the same which our Saviour mentions, they hope that calling him *Lord, Lord*, will make amends for all; and yet it is not possible that fairer warning should be given to any, than he hath given in this Case, that let them pretend what they will, he will say to them at the great Day, *Depart from me all ye workers of Iniquity.*

*Iniquity.* O dreadful Sentence! Not to be mention'd without Horrour, nor to be thought upon without Astonishment. How miserable, for ever miserable, must their condition be, whom Christ at that day shall bid to *Depart* from him! "What is this, some will be apt to say, but "to put all Christians into utter Despair? For, who is there that can "say, that he hath done all that Christ hath said? Truly we have a sufficient Ground for deep Humility and serious Repentance, and timely Reformation. But there is a great difference between *the Failing of our Duty* and *the Works of Iniquity*; between the *Infirmities* of those who sincerely endeavour to do his Will, and the *Presumptuous Sins* of those who despise it; between *Sins committed and heartily repented of*; and *Sins habitually practised and continued in, without any Marks of Amendment.* Such must go out of this World in a State of Sin, and therefore can expect nothing but that dreadful Sentence, which I tremble at the very thoughts of Repeating.

But there are others, who in the sincerity of their Hearts have endeavour'd to do his Will; and whose Sincerity will be so far accepted by him, that he will say to them at that Day, *Come ye blessed of my Father* Matt. 25. *inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World.* 34.

To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us through the Mediation of Christ Jesus our Lord.

S E R-

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# SERMON XXX.

Preached before the

# QUEEN

A T

# WHITE-HALL,

*March 13th. 169<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>.*

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ROMANS VIII. 6.

*For, to be carnally minded is Death; but to be spiritually minded is Life and Peace.*

**I**N these Words is imply'd a Distribution of Mankind into those who are *carnally* and *spiritually minded*; which Distinction is so large and comprehensive, as to take in all sorts and conditions of Men; and of so great Moment and Importance, that their *Life* or *Death*, *Happiness* or *Misery* depend upon it. But, considering the Mixture of Good and Evil in Mankind, it is not an easie matter to set the Bounds of the *carnal* and *spiritual Mind*; and considering the frequent Impunity and Security of bad Men, and the Fears and Troubles, which the best are not exempted from, it seems next to impossible to make out (at least as to this Life) that *to be carnally minded is Death, but to be spiritually minded is Life and Peace*. Yet, our Apostle doth not seem to confine the Consequences here mention'd to another World, (altho' the full Accomplishment of them be only there to be expected;) but if we attend to his Scope and Design in the End of the foregoing Chapter, and the Beginning of this, we shall find that even in this Life the result of a *carnal Mind* is a sort of a *Spiritual Death*; and of a *Spiritual Mind* is *Life and Peace*; For, when St. Paul in the 7th Chapter had represented himself as *carnal and sold under Sin*, although there were great strugglings between the Convictions of his Conscience, and the strength of carnal Inclinations; yet, as long as the latter prevailed so that *he could not do the things* that his Mind and Reason told him he ought to do; but *did those*

those things which he was convinced he ought not to have done: The more he reflected upon himself, the more sad and miserable he found his Condition to be, as appears by that Emphatical expression which follow'd upon it, *O wretched Man that I am, who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death?* But he no sooner finds hopes of Delivery and Escape out of that Estate, but he breaks forth into Transport of Joy and inward Satisfaction. *Thanks be to God who hath given us the Victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Not meerly a Victory over Death, but over Sin too: And so he begins this Chapter after a triumphant manner; *There is therefore no Condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus; who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.* For the Law of the Spirit of Life which was in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the Law of Sin and Death: He that groaned under his Captivity before to the Law of Sin, doth now rejoyce in his Deliverance from it by the Grace of the Gospel: For, what could not be done by natural Freedom, by the Power of the Law and the Force of Reason, is brought to pass by the Assistance of Divine Grace given to the Souls of Men by Jesus Christ. For what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the Flesh: What was that which the Law could not do? It could awaken, convince, terrifie and confound the Consciences of Sinners under the Sense and Apprehension of their Sins; but it could neither satisfie the Justice of God, nor the Minds of Men; it could not remove the Guilt, nor take away the Force and Power of Sin. But God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful Flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the Flesh; i. e. Jesus Christ becoming an expiatory Sacrifice for Sin, took off the damning Power of Sin; and by the prevailing Efficacy of his Grace subdued the strength and force of it to such a degree, *That the Righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the Flesh but after the Spirit.* How could this be, if St. Paul still considered himself in the same Condition he did in the foregoing Chapter? For if he were still in Captivity to the Law of Sin in his Members, how was it possible that the Righteousness of the Law should be fulfilled in him? How could he walk not after the Flesh but after the Spirit, if the Good which he would he did not, and the Evil which he would not that he did? For these things are so repugnant to each other, that when they are spoken of the same Person, it must be under different Considerations; the one of him, as meerly under the Power of the Law; the other, as under the Grace and Influence of the Gospel. The one was like rough and churlish sort of Physick, which searches into every Part, and puts all the ill Humours of the Body into Motion, and makes a general Disturbance and Uneasiness within, but yet lets them remain where they were; the other is like a gentle but more effectual Remedy, which carries off the Strength and Power of inward Corruptions, and alters the Habit and Temper, and puts quite another Disposition into us, which produces very different Effects upon us. For, instead of Horrour and Despair, and inward Anguish and Confusion, there will follow a new Life of Joy and Peace here, and Eternal Happines hereafter.

And this is what the Apostle means in the Words of the Text; *To be carnally minded, &c.* Wherein are two things, which very much deserve our Consideration.

I. The different Tempers of Men's Minds; some are *carnally* and others *spiritually minded.*

II. The different consequences which follow them: *To be carnally minded is Death; but to be spiritually minded is Life and Peace.*

I. The different Tempers of Men's Minds. The different Denominations are taken from *the Flesh* and *the Spirit*; which are here represented as two Principles so different from each other, that the same person cannot be supposed to be acted by both of them. For, as the *Apostle* v. 5. faith in the foregoing Words, *They that are after the Flesh do mind the things of the Flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.* Where *the Flesh*, in a Moral sense, takes in all our sensual Inclinations which are sinfull either in their Nature or Degree. *The Spirit* is that Divine Principle, which possesses the Mind with the Love and Esteem of Spiritual things, and keeps our natural Inclinations within the compass of God's Law. To be *carnally minded*, is to be under the Influence of *carnal things*, so as to make the pursuit of them our chief Design: To be *spiritually minded* is to have so deep and just a Sense of God and his Law upon our Minds, as to make it our business to please him, and therefore to subdue all such Inclinations which are repugnant to his Will.

But here lies the main Difficulty; how to judge concerning this matter so, as to be able to determine whether we our selves be *carnally* or *spiritually minded*. Which is a thing of so great consequence for us to know, that the Peace of our Minds, the true Comfort of our Lives, our due Preparation for Death, and a happy Eternity, do all depend upon. And yet that this is a real Difficulty will appear from these Considerations.

(I.) It requires a greater Knowledge of our selves (as to our spiritual Condition) than most Persons in the World can pretend to. For it is not a slight and superficial View of our selves, not a transient, sudden Reflection, nor a partial Inquiry into our inward Passions, and the Course of our Actions, which can make us capable of passing a true Judgment upon the Temper of our Minds; but there must be a true Light, a serious and diligent Search, frequent Recollection, free and deliberate Thoughts, long Observation and due Comparison of our selves with our selves and with the Law of God, before we can form a just Opinion as to the prevailing Temper and Disposition of our Minds.

It's true, this is not necessary in all Persons; for some (and I am afraid too many) are so *carnally minded*, that the least Reflection or Consideration would make them see how bad their condition is. For, they have no true Sense of God or Religion at all; they have no serious thoughts or apprehensions of Divine and Spiritual things; this World they pretend to know something of, and have too great an Esteem of the Vanities and Pleasures of it; for these wholly take up their Hearts and Time; and they have a favour and relish for any thing that tends to their Greatness or Honour or Entertainment of their Appetites or Fancies here; but if we speak to them of another World, of God and Heaven and a Spiritual Disposition of Soul; either they look on us with Amazement, as if they were insensible of such things; or else with Scorn and Contempt, as if we went about to deceive them. Alas! they are too wise to be imposed upon by us; and they have other things to mind (I am sure not greater or weightier) which take up all their time; and so what through the Business and the Impertinencies of this World, their *Time passeth away as a Tale that is told*; and as though it were a pleasant



pleasant *Tale*, they are troubled only to think it will be so soon at an End. But these are not the Persons, who require any such care to pass a right Judgment upon them; for they can pretend to nothing that is *spiritual*, as to the Tempers and Dispositions of their Minds; and therefore such as these must be set aside, for it is too apparent that they are only sensual and *carnally minded*.

But as the *Papists* distinguish of *the Body of Christ*, so may we of the *carnal Mind*; there is a gross and *Capernaïtical* Sense; and there is a more refined and (if I may use the Expression) a more *Spiritual* Sense of it. For although it be a great Absurdity in them to suppose that a meer Body can be after *the manner of a Spirit*; yet it is not so to suppose a *Carnal Mind* to have a Mixture of some *Spiritual* Qualities and Dispositions in it. And this makes the difference so much harder to be perceived between the *carnally* and *spiritually minded*; since there are the same Faculties of Perception, Reasoning, and Application in both; and the same common Principles of Religion may be owned by both; which may in Reason be supposed to make some impression on the Minds of the more ingenuous part of Mankind, who are not given over to such a *Reprobate Sense* as the former were. Now, how to distinguish between frequent good Impressions on the Mind, and an habitual Temper and Disposition, is not so easie to all who are concerned to distinguish them. And yet a Person may be thoroughly convinced of his Sins, and tremble at the Apprehension of the Justice and Severity of God against them; he may have many Checks and Reluctancies of Conscience while he goes on to commit them; he may sigh and groan and lament under the wretchedness of his Condition by his Love of Sin; and yet may love his Sins all the while more than God or Heaven, or any thing in Competition with them. The difference doth not lie in the Nature or Number of the Impressions from without, but in the inward Principle of Action. A Cistern may be full of Water falling down from Heaven, which may run as long as that holds which fell into it; but a Spring hath it rising up within, and so continues running when the other is spent. A *carnal Mind* may have many *Spiritual* Convictions, and good Motions and Inclinations; but after a time they wear off and leave no lasting Effect behind them; but where there is a Spring in the Soul, there is a fresh and continual supply of such Inclinations, as keep up a constant course of a *Spiritual Life*; which our *Joh. 7. 38.* Saviour calls *Rivers of living Water*.

I confess it is hard to determine what a *Habit* or *Principle* abiding in our Minds is; yet the *Scripture* doth evidently suppose such a thing, when it speaks of the *New Birth*, and the *New Life*, and the *New Creature*, *Joh. 3. 3. 6.* and the *Children of God*; all which are very insignificant Terms, if *1. 13.* there be not under them something answerable to the *First Principles* *Rom. 8. 8,* of *Life*; and if there be not a Divine Spirit dwelling and acting in the *2 Cor. 5. 17.* Souls of good Men, and raising them up above carnal and sensual Objects to things Divine and *1 John 3. 9, 10.* *Spiritual*, and carrying them through the Passage of this World so as to prepare them for a better. But yet there may be many things which carry some Resemblance to this *Principle* within, which come not up to it. There may be such Principles of Education and good Manners, such Awakenings of Conscience, such a Strength of Natural Reason and common Ingenuity, as may carry one on to do some very good things, and yet he may fall short of having a true Principle of *Spiritual Life* in him. But then, there must be another

ther Principle within, which contradicts this, and prevails over it, and carries him on to the Love of Sin, which proves too strong for the Love of God and the due regard to Spiritual things.

The result of this Discourse is, since the *Carnal Mind* is not to be taken meerly for such a one which stands out in opposition to the Gospel, nor for such a one which is insensible of *Spiritual* things; but such as may consist with a common Profession of Religion, and have the same Convictions and good Impressions which others have; it doth require a more than ordinary Acquaintance with our selves to be able to judge aright, whether the Temper of our Minds be *Carnal* or *Spiritual*.

2. But this is not all; for, since there is so great a Mixture of Good and Evil in the better sort of Mankind, there is required not barely Knowledge of our selves, but a good Judgment too to adjust the Proportions of Good and Evil in particular Persons, so as to be able to judge whether we are *carnally* or *spiritually minded*. For, as those who are *Carnal*, while they follow their carnal Inclinations, may have many inward Struglings by spiritual Convictions; so those who are *spiritually minded* may meet with many Combats from the *Flesh*, which may be troublesome, where it cannot prevail. But there is a great difference between the *Spirit* struggling against the *Flesh* in the *carnally minded*, and the *Flesh* struggling against the *Spirit* in those who are *spiritually minded*. For, where there is no perfect Victory, there will be some Opposition; and the best have so many failings to complain of in this World; so many Infirmities and Defects in their good Actions; so many Passions not brought into their due Order; so many Omissions of Personal and Relative Duties; such Variety of Tempers and Weakness of Resolution; such Coldness in Devotion and unreasonable Dejections of Mind; so many unaccountable Fears, and such dreadful Apprehensions of Death and the Consequences of it; that these things must make great Abatements as to such as are truly *spiritually minded*.

But by all these things the Difficulty still increaseth, and therefore it is time to come to the Resolution of it; and that will be by shewing that the difference between the *carnal* and *spiritual Mind* lies in these three Things.

1. In the deliberate Judgment and Choice.
2. In the prevailing Interest.
3. In the constant Rule and Measure of Action.

1. In the deliberate Judgment and Choice. For the main difference as to the *carnal* and *spiritual Mind*, lies in the different End which is aimed at by them. Where the chief End is the pleasing our selves, and the enjoying of any thing as our Happiness under the *Supream Good*, whatever Thoughts and Intentions we may at some times have, to repent of our Sins, and turn our Souls from the Love of Sin the to Love of God, as long as we continue pursuing a wrong End, we have too great Reason to conclude our Minds to be yet *carnal and sold under sin*. For while the *Apostle* represents himself so, he tells us he had his Conscience thoroughly awakened with the Sense of his Sins; even of those which the World is least apt to be sensible of, *inward and secret sins*; he was not only convinced of the *Excellency* and *Purity* of the Law, but had some Pleasure and Satisfaction in it; he had some hearty desires to be rid of his beloved Sins; but yet they were too hard for him, he

Rom. 7. 7,

8. 9.

12. 14.

12.

sighed

sighed and lamented under his deplorable Condition; but till the *Grace of God* came to set him free, he was in a miserable and hopeless State.

But how is it, that the Grace of God thus refines and purifies the Minds of Men, so as of *Carnal* to make them *Spiritual*, when the same Passions and Inclinations remain? A Change there must be, and that real and spiritual, and therefore in our best Faculties, *viz.* our Understandings and our Wills; not by a Revelation of New Objects to the Mind, nor by offering any force upon the Will; but by fixing the Judgment of the Mind and the Choice of the Will upon the best and most desirable Objects, which is God himself, as the *Supreme Good*. The Turn of the Soul which makes one *spiritually minded*, must not be only from gross and sensual Inclinations; but from every other kind of Good, which stands in Competition with the Supreme. A truly *spiritual Mind* is one that is possessed with the Love of God above all, and that values other things, as they tend to the Enjoyment of Him. God must be the only Center of his Hopes and Designs; for in him alone his true Happiness consists: As the Psalmist expresses it; *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth I desire besides thee.* Whatever falls short of this, may agree to a *carnal Mind*; but a *carnal Mind* can never love God as he ought to be loved; not with a Supreme transcendent Degree of Love, which is alone proper and suitable to him. All other kind of Love is beneath his Infinite Goodness and Perfections; and to love him as we do his Creatures, is to do him the greatest Dishonour; for it levels their Perfections, and supposes them to deserve the same Degree of Affection from us. Ps. 73. 19.

But there may be many *spiritual Notions* in Men's minds about God and Religion; about mystical Unions, and the Participations of Divine Love; many seeming Spiritual Raptures and Ecstasies, and yet there may not be this *spiritual Mind*. For the Heats of Enthusiasm may seem to be very *Spiritual*, but are of another kind; they are *Spiritual*, as they are the Effects of a great heating of the *Spirits* by the Force of a vehement Imagination; which hath been often accompanied with as vehement an Inclination to sensual Pleasures; which shews the plain difference between an *exalted Fancy* and a *spiritual Mind*.

A *Spiritual Mind* is such a one as is not only throughly convinced of the Reality of Spiritual things; but of their Excellency and Desirableness, above any others that can be offer'd to our Choice. It sees through all the glittering Vanities of this World; and soars above the most tempting and bewitching Follies of Mankind here; it frequently retires from the Noise and Confusion, the Hurry and Vexation of Worldly Affairs, that it may converse more freely with invisible Objects; not merely by way of Contemplation, but by raising the Affections of the Soul towards them, as the things which it hath chosen for its Happiness.

And this makes a wonderfull Alteration in the thoughts that these different Tempers have concerning the same things. I do not deny but those who have carnal Minds may have some raised and spiritual Thoughts, but they are too cold and speculative; they may have noble and refined Speculations about the invisible World; may be fully convinced that the things *which are seen*, could not be what they are, were it not for the things *which are not seen*; and that the things *which are not seen*, are of incomparably greater value than those which are so much more admired, because *they are seen*. But we must not conclude,

that

that because Men do really believe *Spiritual* things, therefore they are *spiritually minded*, (for that were to suppose all to be *Saints* who are not *Atheists*;) but there must be such a due Preference in our Minds, of that Invisible and Eternal State, above all that is accounted great and desirable here, as gives a just Denomination to one that he is *spiritually minded*; i. e. that his Mind and Soul is fixed upon another World as his proper Happiness, and other things are regarded and valued in subserviency to it:

Gal. 5.17. 24. 2. A *Spiritual* Mind is discerned by the *Prevailing Interest*. For, as long as we are made up of *Flesh* and *Spirit*, there will and must be a Combat between them: *For the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would*: And yet the same Apostle soon after adds, *They that are Christ's have crucified the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts*; the Meaning is, that, in some particular Instances and less remarkable Cases, the *Flesh* may sometimes be too hard for the *Spirit*; but in all notorious Instances of the *Lusts of the Flesh*, which he reckons up; and in the main Issue of all lesser Combats the *Spirit* will be too hard for the *Flesh* in those who are *spiritually minded*; as the *Flesh* will be too hard for the *Spirit* at last in those who are *carnally minded*. If we look on them in the time of the Combat, it will be hard to judge which is most likely to prevail; but those may have the better in some particular Skirmishes, who may lose very much in the State of the War; a good Man may be foiled by surprise or under some disadvantage, but he will recover himself, and it may be, gain Ground by his Falls; and a bad Man may in some fits of Devotion seem so *spiritually minded*, that one might be apt to think he were quite changed, till he returns to his former Practices. If we had been to judge of *Ahab* in the time of his Humiliation; and of *David* in the time of his Impenitency after his Sins of Adultery and Murther, we should have thought in common Justice and Charity, the latter had been the *carnal*, and the former the *spiritual minded* Man. But it was quite otherwise; which shews that we are not to judge of Men's *spiritual* Condition by sudden and violent Motions whether good or bad; but by that Interest which prevails with them in the whole Course of their Lives. To give a general Character of a Man from some violent Passion against the Tenour of his Life, would be like drawing the Picture of a Man in a Fit of an Epilepsy, or a convulsive Motion of his Face. And to believe a Man to be a good Man, because he hath some good Moods and passionate Fits of Devotion, is, as if we should take a piece of rotten Wood for a true *Phosphorus*, because it shines sometimes; or suppose *Judas* to be a Saint, because he was so much in our Saviour's Company. The inward Habits and Dispositions of Men's minds may be cover'd over and disguised a great while; but a tempting Occasion lays them open; as no doubt *Judas* did not get his Habit of Covetousness of a sudden, but it was still growing and ripening under a fair Appearance; and when the proper Season came, the secret Malignity brake forth; and the Temptation of *Thirty Pieces of Silver* discover'd the Baseness and Hypocrisie of his Heart. Sometimes the Vein of Hypocrisie lies deep, and is cover'd over with such a fair outside that no one can have Reason to mistrust it, till it discovers itself, and then the Corruption is found so loathsome, as to render ordinary Sincerity suspicious. But this is a common Fault, either to be too easily deceived, or too unreasonably mistrustfull; there

is no certainty in a Deduction from particulars, but where the Causes are equal and necessary. It is as absurd an Inference that there is no such thing as a *Spiritual Mind*, because some who have pretended to it have been found *Carnal*; as that there is no such thing as common Honesty among Men, because some who have long born the Name of honest Men have been found great Cheats and Impostors. But when a predominant Habit doth discover it self, the Person must bear that Title and Denomination which it gives him.

3. A *Spiritual Mind* is known by the general Conformity of Actions to a *Divine and Spiritual Rule*; and so a *Carnal Mind* by following the *Bent and Inclinations* of the *Flesh*. And there lies a great part of the Difference; for such who lay no Restraint upon their *Natural Inclinations* must needs be *carnally minded*; because the *Flesh*, as St. *Chrysostron* observes, *is not taken, by St. Paul, meerly for the Body, but for the corrupt part of our selves, as consisting of Soul and Body.* It is observed by Cicero 3. de Rep. That Mankind came into the World in a very ill Condition, with a *Body naked, frail and infirm, with a Mind subject to Troubles, dejected with Fears, impatient of Labour, prone to Lust; but in the midst of all this, there is a certain Divine Flame of Wit and Understanding, which lies as it were buried and overwhelmed; but with great Care and Industry may be so preserved and improved, as to command our Appetites and govern our Passions.* But, alas! How little doth the Reason of Mankind signifie to the greatest part of them? It helps them to see their Folly, and like a Sea-light to a sinking Ship in a dark Night, makes those who are aboard, to behold their Misery, without helping them out of it. If the Frame of human Nature be considered in it self, and by way of Speculation, we have no cause to complain of it; for as God hath given us inferiour Faculties suitable to the Constitution of our Bodies, so he hath likewise Superiour, which are capable of controlling and covering them. But when Habit and Custom is joyned with a vicious Inclination, how little doth human Reason signifie? All the Considerations of Natural Order, and Decency, and Regularity, and good Example, are easily over-born by the strong Propensities of a corrupt Inclination; which hurries Men on to satisfie first their brutal Appetites, and leaves Consideration till afterwards. So that Reason seems by such an *After-game*, rather given to torment, than to reform them.

Therefore the wise God hath superadded his own Law to inforce that of Reason by a greater Authority; that Men may think themselves more concerned to take care of their Actions, when they must give an Account of them to one infinitely above them. But what can Mankind do in such a wretched Condition? For the Law of it self is but like a Toyl to a wild Beast; the more he struggles, the more he is intangled; so that he sees his Misery by it, but not his Remedy.

But such is the Goodness and Mercy of God towards Mankind, that he hath never refused to accept those, who have sincerely endeavoured to do his Will according to the Measure of that Assistance which he hath given them. Thus we find Characters of Men in all Ages, who were said to be *Righteous before God, just and upright and perfect Men*; and yet some of the most eminent of these had remarkable failings, as *Noah, Abraham and Job*; yet they had extraordinary Testimonies of God's approving their Integrity and passing by those Faults which were contrary to the general Design and Tenour of their Lives,

I confess we meet with two Instances to the contrary in Scripture, which deserve our Consideration; and those were of extraordinary Persons too, eminent for their long and faithful Service of God; and yet upon single Faults committed by them, he was very severe with them. Which may seem to take much off from this Lenity and Goodness of God towards such who have a general Sincerity of Mind towards him. But, if we more strictly consider these two Cases, we shall find there was something very provoking in the Circumstances of them, which made God so much more displeas'd with the committing them. For, they were Sins committed by them, in their publick Capacities, and about such things wherein the Honour of God was more particularly concern'd.

The first is the Case of *Moses*, who was a great Pattern of Wisdom and Meekness and Faithfulness, for forty Years together, in the Conduct of a very froward People in the Wilderness; yet at last he happen'd to fail in some part of his Duty, and God was so angry with him, that *he would not hear his Prayer for going into Canaan*, but he cut him off in the Wilderness at last, as he did the People for their Unbelief. But what was this Sin of *Moses* which made God so highly displeas'd with him? If we read the Passage as it is related in the History of the Fact, it is not so easie to find it out. The People murmured for want of Water, God upon *Moses* his Prayer commands him, to take his Rod, and in the Assembly of the People, *to speak to the Rock* and the Water should issue out: *Moses* assembles the People, expostulates the matter with them, *strikes the Rock twice* and the Waters came. Where is the great Sin of *Moses* all this while? Yet, he often repeats it, that *God was angry with him* for something done at that time. *God* himself saith, *Moses and Aaron rebelled against him*; and that *they did not sanctifie him* before the People: the *Psalmist* saith, *they provoked his Spirit, so that he spake unadvised with his Lips*. After all, the Sin of *Moses* was a Mixture of Anger and some kind of Infidelity: For, the *Psalmist* saith, *he was highly provoked*; and *God* himself saith, *they believed him not, to sanctifie him in the Eye of the Children of Israel*. The Fault then seems to lie in this, that they were more concern'd for their own Honour than *God's*, and did not so clearly attribute the Power of the Miracle to *God*, but that the People might think they assum'd it to themselves, as appears by their Words to the People, *Hear now, ye Rebels, must we fetch you Water out of the Rock?* Which Expression doth not give *God* the Glory he expected from them; and he is so tender in matters of his own Honour, that he would suffer none to encroach upon it, no not his faithful Servants, but he made them smart for attempting it.

The other case is that of *David's* Numbring the People, and he was a *Man after God's own Heart*, of great Sincerity and Courage and Constancy in his Service. Yet of a sudden he took up a Resolution that he would have *all the People number'd*, without any apparent Reason for it. And although he was discourag'd from the Attempt by those about him, yet ye would be obey'd. And what came of it? Truly, before the thing was completed he grew very uneasie at what he had done, for it is said, *His heart smote him after that he had numbred the People*; and *David* said to the Lord, *I have sinned greatly in what I have done*. And yet in the Book of *Chronicles* it is said, that *he finished it not, because Wrath fell for it against Israel*. What was the Cause of all this Severity against *David*? Was it such an unpardonable Sin for a King to understand the

Number of his People? Suppose it a Failing, yet why should God be so angry for one such failing in him that had served God so sincerely as *David* had done? There must be something extraordinary in this Case; for, God sometimes supposes *the People to be Number'd*; and in some Cases he requires or allows it; why then is he so displeas'd now at the doing it? The best Account I know of it, is this; It was not a meer Piece of Vanity and Ostentation in *David*, (although that be displeasing to God,) but it was a thing (as designed by him) which was generally look'd on as inconsistent with the Fundamental Promise made to *Abraham*; and so it is mention'd in the *Chronicles*, why the *Numbering* was not exactly taken, because the Lord had said *He would increase Israel like the Stars of the Heavens*. Which seems to imply that there was a general Notion received among the People, that since God promised to increase them *beyond Number*, no one ought to go about to take the exact Number of them. For, this must seem to savour of Infidelity, and a Contempt or Mistrust of God's fundamental Promise. But however upon such Occasions God might use two of his most faithful Servants thus, yet we have no Reason to question his Readiness to pardon these and other their Failings upon a sincere Repentance, and to accept of their general Care and Endeavour to please him instead of a perfect Obedience.

But I have something farther to offer, for the clearing these two difficult Cases, *viz.* that there is a Difference to be observed between the Rule of God's Proceedings with particular Persons, as to the general Sincerity of their Actings; and the Measure of God's political Justice as to Persons in publick Capacities. The Reason is, because in the latter Cases, God may justly have a Regard, not meerly to the Actions themselves, but to the Circumstances of the People they are related to. Thus *Moses*, mentions it three several times, *The Lord was angry with me for your sakes*; and again, *the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes and would not hear me; and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee, speak no more to me of this matter.* It seems he was so much concern'd as to pray to God, and that earnestly, that he would give him leave to conduct the People into *Canaan*: But God would not grant his Request. But he tells the People that it was *for their sakes* that he was denied. *Furthermore, the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over Jordan, &c.* So that the Blow which was given to the Head was for the sake of the whole Body.

And it is remarkable in the Case of *David*, that before he fell into the Sin of Numbering the People, *The Anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel; and he moved David against them to say, Go Number Israel and Judah.* From whence it is evident, that the Sins of a People may provoke God to let Princes fall into such Sins, which may give just occasion to God to punish both together. But this is a very different Case from the Method of God's dealings with particular Persons with regard to their Integrity, according to the Terms of the Covenant of Grace. Which is established on such Foundations, that we need not give way to Despondencies for the sake of such particular Acts of Severity.

II. I am now to consider the different Consequences of these two, *To be carnally minded is Death, but to be spiritually minded is Life and Peace*; which, in short, is, that the Advantage is far greater which comes to Mankind by one than by the other.

And that will appear by comparing them together,

- (1.) As under equal Circumstances.  
 (2.) As under unequal Circumstances.

1. As under equal Circumstances. And here we have two sorts of Persons to consider.

1. Those who have Convictions of Conscience going along with a *carnal Mind*. Such who look on the Conditions of Men in this World at a Distance, and judge only by Appearance, would be apt to think that those who do allow themselves all the Liberties which a *carnal Mind* doth incline them to, have very much the Advantage of those who are under the Restraints of a *spiritual Mind*; for they are bound to severe Rules of Vertue and Mortification, to deny all *Ungodliness and Worldly lusts*, and to live soberly and righteously and godly in this present World; and these are thought to be very hard things; whereas such who are not under these Difficulties, seem to lead the most pleasant and easie Lives, enjoying themselves and being full of Noise and Confidence, and appear to be all Mirth and good Humour. But there is another Account to be taken of these things: If Men could look within and see all the secret Misgivings, the inward Horrors of Conscience, the Impatience and Dissatisfaction they have, when they seriously reflect on their evil Courses, it would quite alter their Apprehensions of

*Est autem  
 unus dies  
 bene & ex  
 præceptis  
 tuis ætius  
 peccanti  
 immortalitati  
 antequam  
 ferendus.  
 Cicer. Tuscul.  
 Qu. 1. 5.  
 c. 2.*

these things, and make them conclude with the Roman Orator, *That one Day spent according to the Rules of Vertue were to be preferr'd before everlasting Debaucheries*. And he was no Fool, no Pedant, no mean and contemptible Person, who said this, but a Man of Wit and Sense, of Quality and Experience, who had Opportunities and Means enough to have pursued the most sensual and voluptuous course of Life; which yet we see out of Judgment and Choice he despised, and preferr'd a far shorter Life according to the Rules of Vertue, before a vicious Immortality. And yet, how short were the Encouragements to a good Life, and the Dissuasives from Sin among the best of them, in Comparison of what we all know now by the Gospel of Christ? They went no farther than meer Natural Reason and the common Sense of Mankind carried them; but we profess to believe *the Wrath of God revealed from Heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of Men*; and that there will be a great and terrible Day, wherein Men must receive according to their Works, whether they be Good or Evil.

*Rom. i. 18.  
 2. 5, 6.  
 16. 14. 10.  
 2 Cor. 15.  
 10, 11.*

And will not this dreadful Consideration awaken the drowsie and secure Sinner, and make him look about him betimes, while there is yet any hopes of Mercy? Will he not become so wise at least, as to enter into the Consideration of his Ways, and to look back on the former Course of his Life, to examine and compare that with the Law of God by which he must be judged? And if we have but Patience to do this, he will have no farther Patience with himself, for being guilty of such unspeakable Folly. He will abhor himself for all his sensual and sinful Delights; which will turn into the greatest Bitterness and Anguish to his Soul; He will lament his Folly and Wickedness with the deepest Sorrow; and take up sincere and firm Resolutions to return no more to the Practise of them. And if this be the Result, as it ought to be, of all the distinguishing sinful Pleasures of a *carnal Mind*, I leave it to the

most



most impartial Mind to resolve whether there will be the least Advantage by pursuing them.

2. But we have too great Reason to suppose that Men may harden themselves to such a Degree of Wickedness, as to be insensible of the Folly of it, and to mock at those who go about to reprove them for it. Such as these are at ease, because they have no Sense of their Condition; but so are those in a Lethargy: Is their Case therefore to be envied; or compared with those in Health altho' more sensible of Pain and Danger? Who seem to be better pleased at sometimes, and transported with their own Imaginations than Men in a Frenzy? And yet no Man thinks their Condition happier for it. There is a sort of *Moral Frenzy* which possesses some part of Mankind, who, are not only extravagant in their Actions, but assume such a Degree of Confidence in committing them, as though the wise Men of all Ages had been the only remarkable Fools in it. But it is no such easie matter to run down the Principles of Virtue and Religion, they have stood the Shock of all the Sarcasms and Réproaches of former Times; and there is still nothing at the Bottom of all the Scorn and Contempt that is cast upon them, but a *carnal and profane Temper of Mind*; which may bear them up for a while, but it will be sure to end in everlasting Confusion; and then they will find what they were so unwilling to believe, *That to be carnally minded is Death*. Not a meer State of Insensibility, but the worst kind of Death; A Death of perpetual Horrour and Torment; A Death without the Power of Dying, and yet with a perpetual Desire of it; A Death whose Sting can never be taken out; and whose Terror is said to be as *everlasting* as the Joys of Heaven. And shall not the Apprehension of such a *Death*, as this, so dreadful, so unavoidable, so insupportable, make the greatest Sinners to tremble, and be confounded at the Apprehension of it? And, if once such Thoughts break into their Minds, farewell then to all the imaginary Pleasure and Satisfaction of a carnal Mind; for it must sink it into the *Confusion* if not the *Despair* of Hell.

(2.) But I have hitherto represented the Disadvantages of one side; but are there not such on the other too? Some are too apt to think a *spiritual Mind* to be nothing but a disorder'd Fancy, and melancholy Imaginations of invisible things. If this were all, it were so far from being *Life and Peace*, that there could be no real Satisfaction about it. But a *spiritual Mind* is truly the most desirable thing we are capable of in this World. For, it is the best Improvement of our Minds, which are *Spiritual*. It is the purging and refining them from the Dross and Corruption which debased them. It is the advancing them towards the Divine Nature, by a gradual Participation of it. It is the raising them above the carnal Delights, and the sollicitous Cares and perplexing Fears of this World; and fitting them for a perpetual Conversation with Divine and Spiritual Objects.

And what then can be more agreeable to the best part of our selves here, than to have a Mind so disengaged from this World and so fit for a better? So that we may be content to take a view of the worst which can be supposed as to Disadvantage here, which is, that good Men may be under *unequal Circumstances* as to their Condition in this Life; that is, when the regarding another World more than this, may make their outward Condition more uneasie here, than it might have been, if they had follow'd only the Dictates of a *carnal Mind*.

There are two sorts of Troubles we are to expect in this World, (1.) Such as we bring upon our selves by our own Acts: (2.) Such as are common to all Mankind: In both these the spiritual Mind hath the Advantage.

(1.) As to such which Men bring upon themselves. Let this be supposed; as it ought to be, when God pleases among Christians, *who are to follow Christ in taking up his Cross*: Is there any thing in this, which overthrows the Advantage of a *spiritual Mind* above a *carnal*? Can a *carnal Mind* secure Men from Pains and Diseases, from Losses and Disappointments? Nay doth not the Pursuit of carnal Pleasures bring more Troubles upon Men in this Life, than the Case of Persecution doth upon the best Christians? If the loathsome Diseases, the reproachfull and untimely Deaths, which of all things ought to be most avoided, by such who believe no Life after this, be compared with the Pains and Martyrdoms of those who have suffer'd for their Religion, these will appear to be far more eligible than the other, because the Mind hath far greater Satisfaction under them, and a certain Expectation of an infinite Reward to follow upon them. Whereas the other can have no Comfort in looking back on what they have done, or forward in what they are to expect. For they have destroy'd their own Happiness and hasten'd that upon themselves which they account their only Misery.

(2.) As to the common Calamities of Life, which none can prevent or avoid, the *spiritual Mind* hath very much the Advantage of the *carnal*; for the one fills them with inward Peace and Satisfaction of Mind, which of all things carry Men best through the Troubles of Life; being joyned with Patience, Humility, Self-denial, and Submission to the Will of God; which are all the genuine Effects of a *spiritual Mind*; but a *carnal Mind* is froward and impatient, uneasie to it self and to all about it, and this makes every Pain and Trouble to be much greater than it would have been; like the Ass in the Fable: Which lay down in the Water with his Burthen of Wool and so made it heavier than before.

There were two things the philosophical Men of Pleasure sought to comfort themselves by, under the unavoidable Troubles of Life; which the *spiritual Mind* hath far greater Advantages than any of them had, as to both of them; and these are *Reflection* and *Expectation*.

(1.) *Reflection*. When *Epicurus* was in his last Agonies under the Stone, what a miserable way was it for him to go about to comfort himself, by reflecting upon his *Atoms* and his *Maxims*, his imaginary Notions of the Happiness of Life consisting in Pleasure, when his Life was so near being ended by excessive Pain? But a good Man that hath sincerely endeavour'd to *serve God in his Generation*, and to do all the good he could, and to promote the Interests of Religion and Vertue in the World, may in the Midst of many Failings and Infirmities, look back with comfort on the Course of his former Life, and by the Peace of a good Conscience may enjoy inward Satisfaction under such Pains and Distempers, which make Life uneasie and Death more welcome, as it is a Passage to a far better State. And that is the next thing.

(2.) *Expectation*. It was a sorrowful Expectation which *Epicurus* supported himself with, when he was in the Prospect of Death; which was no more, than that the subtle *Atoms* which made up his Soul, would soon be scatter'd and disperfed, he knew not where, and then he should be, as if he had never been: But what Comfort is there in such

Epicurus  
Hermacho. V.  
Ciceron.  
de Finibus,  
l. 2. c. 30.

such a *Dissolution*? Men that have deserved it, may heartily wish it; but they have deserved something worse, and that they must expect. For, the just and holy *God*, will certainly call them to an Account for all their Vices and Follies; and *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*; and what a miserable Case are those in, who have nothing to look for but *Judgment and fiery Indignation, which shall consume the Adversaries of God and Religion?*

But, O the blessed Hope and joyful Expectation that attends a *spiritual Mind*! Especially when it is enliven'd and assisted by the powerful Influences of Divine Grace. For without that, even good Men may be liable to some Dejections and Fears as to another World, from the Vastness of the Change, the Sense of their Failings, the Weakness of their Minds, and Mistrust of their own Fitness for Heaven; but so great is the Goodness and Mercy of *God* towards them that sincerely love and fear him, that he always makes their Passage safe, though it be not so triumphant. And although *the Valley of the Shadow of Death* may seem gloomy and uncomfortable at a Distance; yet when *God* is pleased to conduct his Servants through it, he makes it a happy Passage into a State of a glorious Immortality and everlasting *Life and Peace*. To which *God*, &c.

S E R -

# SERMON XXXI.

Preached before the

## King and Queen

A T

## WHITE-HALL,

O N

## Christmas-Day, 1693.

St. JOHN III. 17.

*For God sent not his Son into the World to condemn the World; but that the World through him might be saved.*

**T**Hese words are part of the Gospel written by St. *John*, wherein he doth not only fill up the History of our Saviour with many particular Discourses omitted by the other Evangelists, but the whole seems to be penned in another Strain and with some different Purpose and Design. It's true, that they all agree in the same general End of Writing which St. *John* mentions, viz. *That we might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his Name*; but they make use of several Methods, as most agreeable to the Circumstances of the Time and Place and Occasion of their Writing. St. *Matthew* wrote his Gospel for the sake of the *Jews*; and therefore he begins with the *Genealogy* of *Jesus Christ* from *Abraham*, and shews that the Prophecies were accomplished in him, and how he came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it, and that his Miracles and Doctrine were sufficient to convince them that he was the promised *Messias*. St. *Mark* wrote only a summary Account of the most material Passages relating to the Person and Doctrine of Christ for the sake of the *Gentiles*. St. *Luke* takes a larger compass, and puts things into an exacter Order of Time, as himself tells us, and adds many Circumstances relating

relating to the Birth of Christ, and the general Advantage to Mankind by his coming; that he was to be a *Light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the Glory of his People Israel*. St. John succeeding the rest, found two great things which gave him occasion of writing his Gospel; 2. 31.

1. The perverting the Doctrine of Christ by the *Ebionites* and *Cerinthians*, who pretended to give great Honour to Christ as an excellent Person both for Wisdom and Holiness, but yet so that he was but a *meer Man*, to whom God, upon his Baptism, had given extraordinary Gifts and Assistances of his Holy Spirit.

2. The other was, that the Gospel which was designed for the Universal good of the World met with such cold Reception and Entertainment from it. *He was in the World, and the World was made by him, and the World knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.* ch. 1. 11.  
12.

What could be more uneasy to so true a lover of Christ as St. John was, than that he lived to see his Doctrine perverted, and his Design in so great a Measure rendered ineffectual? And therefore in the writing of this Gospel,

1. He begins after another manner; and in a very short, significant and lofty Style, he sets forth his Eternal Being and Godhead. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And as the Eternal Power and Godhead were understood by the things that were made, as St. Paul saith, so he adds, that all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* Which is as certain an Argument of the Divinity of Christ, as there is of the Being of God from the Creation of the World. Rom. i. 20:  
vers. 31

2. As to the other Point; it was indeed a sad and amazing Consideration, that the wonderfull *Love of God in sending his Son into the World*, should have so little Effect upon the Generality of those to whom he was sent and his Doctrine preached; but the Apostle contents himself with these two Accounts of it.

1. That it was far from being God's Intention or Design in sending his Son to make Men's condition worse and more desperate; *For God sent not his Son into the World to condemn the World, but that the World through him might be saved.*

2. But it might be presently objected, That if this were God's Intention, the World would not have received so little Benefit by it, but according to the Terms of Salvation proposed by the Gospel so few will have advantage by it; therefore the Evangelist adds, that if Men did perish they must thank themselves for it; *For, this is the Condemnation that light is come into the World, and Men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil, v. 19.*

So that there are two things which deserve our Consideration.

I. The wonderfull Condescension and gracious Intention of God in sending his Son into the World.

II. The true Reason why so many miscarry, as to their Salvation notwithstanding; *viz.* their own Wickedness and Folly.

1. The former of these, is that, which upon this Day we have particular Reason to take notice of; not in a slight superficial manner, (as though an Annual Commemoration of it were all that God expected from us,) but our Minds and Souls ought to be possessed with a deep and humble

humble Sense of so great, so undeserved, so astonishing a Condescension of God to Mankind. And the more we think and consider of it, the more amazing and surprizing it must appear to us: For when the Psalmist thought but of God's Providence towards Mankind, he could not but break out into that Expression, *Lord, what is Man, that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of Man, that thou so regardest him!* What is Man indeed! a Mass of Vanity and Disorder; weak in his Judgment, willfull in his Passions; uncertain in his best Resolutions, violent in his worst Inclinations; strangely bent upon what tends to his Ruine, and hardly brought to understand and pursue his truest Interest! What is such a Creature as this, that a God infinitely Wise and Powerfull, far above our Thoughts as well as our Services, should concern himself about the low and trifling Affairs of Mankind! But such is the Goodness and Condescension of God, that he humbles himself so far, as not only to behold, but to govern the things that are done upon Earth.

Psal. 8. 4.  
144. 3.

But *what is Man that he should visit him!* Not with the meer common Demonstrations of his Kindness, which he affords to other Creatures; but that when Mankind had so far degenerated and fallen off from God by their Sins, that they deserved to be for ever cast off and forgotten by him; that then God should visit him by *sending his Son into the World that the World through him might be saved*; this is so far above our Imaginations as well as Deserts, that it seems to be the most colourable pretence for Infidelity, that it is too great a thing for Mankind to believe.

But I am sensible, that in this sceptical and unbelieving Age, there is such a Humour of cavilling against matters of Revelation, especially this fundamental Article of it, that it would seem as if we were afraid to look their Objections in the Face, if we take no notice of them; and on the other side, to insist too much upon them, were to make them appear much more considerable than they are. Therefore I shall pass over all the trifling and impertinent talk of such Men (which is not whispered in Corners, but I am afraid is become a matter of too common and publick Discourse) and I shall single out that which seems to have the greatest weight in it; *viz.* suppose God should have an Intention to offer Terms of Salvation to Mankind, yet what need was there that *the Son of God should come into the World* for that End? Had not God easier Methods of doing it than by the *Incarnation and Crucifixion of his Son*? Is it not more credible, that God should forgive Sins without any Atonement, than that he should *send his Son* to be a Sacrifice of Propitiation to himself? Is it not enough for us to believe all the Principles of Natural Religion to be true; for we own a God, and Providence, and a Life to come, and Rewards and Punishments of Mankind according to the Nature of their Actions; but why should our Faith be cramp'd by such incredible *Mysteries* as these, concerning *the Son of God's coming into the World*, in such a manner as the *Evangelists* describe it? This is so far from being a kindness to the World, that it makes the Condition of Salvation so much harder, if we must believe things which seem so impossible to us, and so hard to be reconciled to the *Natural Principles of Reason and Religion*.

I shall not dispute it with such Men whether these late Pretenders to *Natural Religion* have at the bottom any real Kindness for the Principles of it, or not; I am willing to hope the best, and that it is a meer Dissatisfaction in them as to our revealed Religion; and that this pretended

tended Zeal for *Natural Religion* is more than a meer Sham and Disguise to avoid a more odious Imputation. But let it be as great and real as they pretend, what I at present undertake, is to make it appear, *That none who do embrace the Principles of Natural Religion can have any Reason to reject the Christian, even as to this Article of God's sending his Son into the World,* which they seem most to stumble at.

I shall not go about to shew, how the Christian Religion not only supposes, but improves, refines, establishes and enforces the most noted and allowed Principles of *Natural Religion*, as to the Being of God and Providence, the most agreeable way of Worship; the Nature and Kinds of Moral Duties, the Rewards and Punishments of another World, since no one of common Sense can deny that the Christian Religion is very exact and particular in these things above any other Institution in the World.

And therefore I cannot, but in passing, take notice, that I do not remember any one Institution in the World with respect to Religion, except that which we have by Revelation, which hath not some notorious Blunders in it, as to the Principles of *Natural Religion* and Virtue; and therefore they have far less Reason to quarrel with Christianity than any other Religion (if their quarrel were not really against all, as I fear it is;) Let them look abroad over the Unchristian World, and they will find such foolish Notions, such vain Superstitions, such incoherent Fables, such immoral Practices allowed by their several Religions, as would make a considering Man wonder how the Notion of Religion could be so debas'd among Men. Let them look backward upon the Passages of elder Times, and they shall find either they set up false Gods with the true, or the false Worship of the true God; or a Worship disagreeable to the Divine Nature by mean Representations, or uncouth Sacrifices, or impure Rites, or else there were some horrible Flaws, as to the common Principles of Morality, as to conjugal Society, or the Rights of Property; or the due Regard to the Preservation of Mankind; or they give such a pitifull Representation of the Rewards and Punishments of another Life; as if they had a Mind to have them look'd on as Fables, or despis'd as unworthy our regarding them above the present Pleasures of Life. But I dare challenge the most cavilling Sceptick to find any just Fault with the Duties of Christianity; for the Worship of God required therein, is pure, holy, spiritual, very agreeable to the Divine Nature and the common Reason of Mankind. The Moral Precepts of it are clear, weighty and comprehensive. And those who have delivered them to us, neither commend any Vice, nor sink the Reputation of any Vertue, they never lessen our Duties to God, or to one another; all the Just Complaint is, that the Precepts are too strict and severe, too good and too hard for Mankind to practise them. But is this an Objection against our Religion, or against Mankind? If they think that, let our Religion require what it will, the generality of the World will still live and act like Brutes, and go against all Reason and Religion; how can we help it? But we hope the blame is not to be laid on Reason or Religion, that so great a part of Mankind are either Fools or Madmen; *i. e.* either want Sense to understand their Duty, or are resolv'd not to practise it. Especially considering, that the Rewards and Punishments of another Life, are set forth in the Gospel, with that Clearness, that Force, that Authority, that if any thing of that Nature would work upon Mankind, these must.

But all these things I pass over, and come to that which I propos'd as my chief Design, which is to prove, *That none who truly believe the Principles of Natural Religion, can have any Reason to reject this fundamental Article of it, as to God's sending his Son into the World.* And that upon two Accounts.

I. That the *Principles of Natural Religion* make this Design appear very credible, or fit to be believed by Men of Sense and Understanding.

II. That the *Principles* on which this fundamental Article of our *Revealed Religion* stands, afford sufficient Evidence to prove it true; and therefore that we are bound to believe it.

As to the former, the *Grounds* or *Principles* which I go upon, are these:

I. *That the great End of Christ's coming into the World, viz. the Salvation of Mankind, is most agreeable to the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of God.* No one who believes a God, can deny him to be of infinite Wisdom and Goodness; for the very same Reasons which move Men to believe a God, do convince them that he must be of infinite Wisdom and Goodness, seeing the strongest Evidences to prove his Being are from the Instances of them in the World.

These being then supposed, as essential and inseparable Attributes of the Divine Nature; we are to consider what End with respect to Mankind is most agreeable to these to carry on; and we must suppose Mankind to be made up of Soul and Body, which are capable of Pleasures and Satisfaction, both in this World and another: But our Souls are of an immortal Nature, that will subsist in Happiness or Misery after this Life, otherwise the Rewards and Punishments of another World signify nothing; the Question then is (if it can be made a Question) Whether it be more agreeable to the infinite Goodness and Wisdom of God to provide for the Well-being of Mankind in such a low and gloomy Region, as this Earth is, or to advance them into a far better Place, and better Company, and more Noble and Divine Delights, and those not depending on a fading, drooping, dying Life, but on the perpetual Enjoyment of a complete Happiness both of Soul and Body. No one that ever dares to think or consider of these things, can believe there is any Comparison between them; so that the Salvation tender'd by the Gospel, is the most agreeable End which the Wisdom and Goodness of God could carry on for the Benefit of Mankind.

*But why should Mankind flatter themselves with the Hopes or Expectation of a Happiness so far above what they can pretend to deserve?*

There were some Grounds for such an Objection as this; if we supposed the rewards of another Life to come from any other Fountain than the infinite goodness of God towards those who sincerely love him and endeavour to please him; although with many Falings and Imperfections. But this is the only *Hypothesis*, which we maintain to be the Christian Doctrine: And what is there in it, which is repugnant to the Wisdom and Goodness of God? What was it but infinite goodness which gave a Being to the World at first, and hath preserved it ever since, and made it so useful and beneficial to Mankind? What is it, but infinite Goodness that suffers us to live and enjoy so many Comforts of Life, after so many great and continual Provocations? If we were to argue from our Deserts, it were impossible for us to justify the wonderfull Patience



tience and Long-suffering of God, towards the sinful Race of Mankind; for we are certain, that they have long since deserved to be cut off from the Face of the Earth? If we consider the Justice and Holiness of God, whereby he is daily provoked to punish Offenders, and the Power he hath to execute his Justice in a Moment, without any opposite Power to controll or resist him; we have reason to be astonished at the wonderfull Patience and Forbearance of God, of which we every day see so large Experience. But this is not all; he doth not only suffer them to live, but often makes their Condition easie and prosperous as to this World, having Health, Riches and Honour, and the hopes of their Posterity, enjoying the same things after them. Now these to such, who do not believe or value another Life, are the greatest things God can do to their Satisfaction. But if they can allow so much Goodness in God towards those who continually offend him; why should they question greater Instances of it towards those that endeavour to please him? I do not mean as to this World, but as to another which they value far before it; for if they do not, they have no Reason to expect any Happiness in it: Why then should it be thought more unreasonable for God to bestow the happiness of another Life, on those who esteem and choose it, than to give the good things of this Life to those who love and admire it? I do not say, the Wisdom is equal in the Choice; but the Goodness of God is wonderfull in both. And there can be no imaginable Ground to suspect, that God should be really less kind to those who love him best. It is a vain thing to talk of those *being saved by Christ's coming into the World*, who do not heartily love God and keep his Commandments; for the whole design of the Gospel is to persuade us to one in order to the other; and therefore it is not a well-grounded hope, but a fond Imagination for any to expect Salvation by Christ on any other Terms. If we then take in the whole *Hypothesis* or true Scheme of Christianity together, it is no other than that *God sent his Son into the World, that the World through him might be saved*; not by continuing in the sinfull Practices of this World, which St. John Joh. I. 16. calls *the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life*; but by subduing and mortifying all disorderly Passions do prepare themselves for a better State. Now, if there be in our Minds a firm Perswasion of the infinite Goodness of God, of which we are convinced by meer Natural Reason; why should it be thought hard to believe, that God should take care of so great and good an end, as the Eternal Salvation of those who truly love and obey him?

II. The next Principle agreeable to Natural Reason and Religion is, *That no such thing as Salvation or Happiness in a future State can be expected without the particular Favour of God.* For, all who do own Natural Religion, must agree that the Soul of Man is an immortal thinking Being; and therefore its Happiness must consist in such a sort of thinking, as carries the greatest Pleasure and Satisfaction along with it. Let us think with our selves what a Soul separate from the Body can do, to make it self happy: Here it was intangled, corrupted, and therefore apt to be deceived by the false Appearances of things, which glide through the Senses and leave too lasting Impressions on the Mind; and thereby it comes to mistake Shews for Substance, and meer Colours for Realities. But this is a Mistake so common and so fatal to Mankind, that very few are throughly undeceived in this World; for one

way or other they are apt to flatter themselves with some pleasing Mistakes and delightful Errors of Life. But as soon as the Soul is dislodged from this cloudy Mansion in the Body, all things will then appear, not as by an uncertain Sky-light in a dark Room, but in an open and distinct View, and then it will be impossible to be any longer deceived by false Representations of things. What then can be conceived sufficient to entertain and please the Mind? Will it be the Reflection on the past Pleasures of the Body? No certainly; for those cannot bear a severe Reflection now; and the very thoughts of them make Men's minds very uneasy; for the most tempting Pleasures of Sin leave no grateful Relish behind them. How then should the Mind bear up it self in another State, when its Reflections must be far more constant and severe? What then? Can the Mind lay it self asleep, and put it self into a State of unthinking? That were all one, as a kind of Self-annihilation if it be of a thinking Nature. There is a State of *unthinking* in this World, which is too common; when the Mind is as it were overwhelmed and stifled with Feathers; I mean, is so taken up with trifling and vain Imaginations, as hardly give way to one serious Thought. But this is impossible in another State; and therefore nothing but what will bear a most strict and severe Scrutiny can give any Support or Comfort to the Mind then. It must be true and real good to create any Satisfaction; it must be durable and lasting to keep it up; it must be complete and perfect to answer all the just and reasonable Desires of an immortal Soul. And what can this be less than God himself? And therefore the Christian Religion speaks most agreeably to Natural Reason, when it still supposes the Happiness of another World to consist in the Presence and Enjoyment of God. For those must have all that is desirable, who enjoy the Favour of him who commands all things, and knows how to suit them to the greatest Advantage to those to whom he designs to shew his Favour.

And this Prospect of another State, or of *the Salvation of Mankind by Christ's coming into the World*, is that which lets us into another View of all that relates to the Son of God's coming into the World: For if our Minds be possessed with great Apprehensions of the Power and Greatness of the World; all that the Gospel represents as to the manner of God's sending his Son into the World, his being born of an obscure Virgin, being laid in the common Manger, being bred up in a private place, having so mean Followers, meeting with so cold a Reception from his own People, and at last, being exposed to an ignominious Death by them, looks very reproachful and contemptible. But on the other side, if we could raise our Minds to such Ideas of things here, as the glorious Spirits above have; and see how all things are esteemed by them according to the Ends and Purposes they are designed for, we should then perceive how admirably all these things were fitted for his great End; which was to wean Men's hearts from the Pomp and Vanities of this World and to prepare them for a better; and we should then have quite another Opinion of these things: For as there is a certain Greatness, which is above all the formal Shews and affected Appearances of it, so when a great and noble Design is to be carried on, the true Measure of *Decorum* in that Case, is that which is most serviceable to the principal End. If a great Person had a Design to rescue some near Relations out of Slavery, he would never go with a splendid Equipage and a long Train of Attendance, which would but make his  
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Person more gazed at and his Design less effectual. If he had intended to have rescued them by force out of Captivity, it had been necessary to have had Power and Strength proportionable to his Design; but if it were only by Perswasion, then he must accommodate himself to such Methods as were most likely to prevail.

The great End of the coming of Christ was to deliver the Souls of Men from a much worse Captivity, *viz.* of their own sinful Passions and the Devil's Tyranny by their means; but he did not come in a way of Violence to break open the Prison-doors, and in an instant to knock off their Fetters and bid them be free; but he makes use of all the gentle and effectual Methods of Perswasion, not only by his Words but by his own Example; that they might learn by him to despise this World, who had so little in it, and to prepare for that from whence he came, where their Happiness should be unconceivable and without End.

III. The third Principle is, *That no such particular Favour of God is to be expected, as long as his Displeasure is so just against Mankind for Sin, and no effectual Means used to remove it.* The truth is, the whole Scheme of the Gospel turns upon this Point, whether God be really displeas'd with Mankind for their Sins, so as to need a Reconciliation: For, if all that the Scripture so often expresses concerning the *Wrath and Displeasure of God* against Mankind for Sin, be only figurative and hyperbolical Expressions, then the whole Design of the Gospel must be given up as a meer Scheme; for, if God be not really displeas'd, there is no need of Reconciliation; if no need of that, then there can be no need of Christ's coming to reconcile us to God; and if he did not come for that End, we have no Reason to believe the Scripture, which affirms it over and over. And I do not think any stronger Argument can be brought to prove a thing, than that the most emphatical Expressions are so often applied to that purpose, by such Persons who used all Sincerity and Plainness. So that this matter as to the Scripture is clear, if any thing can be made so; and if nothing can, I cannot see how it is possible to have a written Rule of Faith; since all Writings are capable by Ambiguity of Words and Phrases, by the different Use of Particles and Transposition of Letters and Syllables, of very different Interpretations.

But this is not my present Business, which is rather to consider the Natural Sense and Reason of Mankind as to this Matter. We cannot in Reason suppose any such Passion in an infinitely perfect Being, as that which we call *Wrath and Anger* in Men. For that is a violent Perturbation arising from Surprise and Indignation; but there can be no Disorder or Surprise in a Being of Infinite Wisdom. Therefore *Wrath in God* must suppose two Things.

1. A just Cause of Displeasure given by us.
2. Such a just Displeasure following upon it as will end in the severe Punishment of Offenders if it be not removed.

Now, whether there be a just Cause of Displeasure or not, must depend upon the Natural Differences of Good and Evil. And it is impossible that any one who exercises his Reason, can judge amiss in this Matter. Not, that all the Differences of Good and Evil are equally clear, for all Propositions in Mathematicks are not so; but it is sufficient to our Purpose, that the general Principles are so; and the greater Instances; so that no Man can think that he acts as much according to

to Reason in one as the other. And, can any one of common Sense imagine God to be as well pleased with him who blasphemes his Name and despises his Service, and hates Religion, as with one that fears and Honours him; and endeavours to please him? Can he be as well pleased with him, that assassines his Parents, as with him that obeys them? With him that robs and defrauds his Neighbour, as with him that relieves him in his Necessities? With him who subdues his disorderly Passions, as with him that gives way to them? With him who is cruel, inhuman and perfidious, as with him that is faithful and just and compassionate? These are but some of the Instances of the Differences of Good and Evil, but they are so plain and notorious, that a Man must renounce the common Principles of Humanity, who doth not own them. And to say there are no such Differences, because there have been Mistakes and Disputes about some things accounted Good and Evil, is as absurd, as to say, there is no Difference between Day and Night, because in the Twilight it is hard to distinguish them. But if there be such a real Difference in the Nature of Humane Actions, and God be a strict observer of them, he being a God of infinite Holiness and Justice, cannot but be offended with Mankind's wilful Omission of what they know to be good, and Commission of what they know to be evil.

But here we must distinguish between God's Displeasure against the Actions and against the Persons who commit them. The former is a necessary Consequent upon the Evil of Sin, and can never be removed, for God is irreconcilable to Sin. But those who commit Sin are his Creatures; and therefore capable of Mercy and Forgiveness. There is always a Desert of Punishment following upon Sin; but there is no inseparable Connection between the Sin and the Punishment; for the great and wise Governour of the World acts not by Necessity of Nature in punishing Sinners, but by the Methods of Wisdom and Justice. And if the saving of Sinners upon their Repentance can be made agreeable to these, such is the Mercy and Goodness of God to his Creatures, that there is great Reason to hope for a Reconciliation. For, although God be displeas'd, he is not implacable; although he be justly provok'd to punish Sinners, yet there is no absolute Necessity that he should; nor any irreversible Decree that he will do it; and therefore notwithstanding this Displeasure of God, there is a way still left open for Reconciliation which leads to the next.

IV. The fourth Principle is, *That if God be thus displeas'd with the Sins of Mankind, and yet there is a Possibility of Reconciliation between God and them, He alone is the most proper and competent Judge, on what Terms this Reconciliation may be obtained.* For being both the offended Party and the supreme Governour, he hath the sole Right on both Accounts of fixing those Terms and Conditions, upon which he will forgive Sins, and receive the Offenders into Favour. It is a vain thing for any to argue from one Attribute of God against another. Some are apt to flatter themselves that God will easily forgive Sins, because he is merciful, but they ought to consider that he is just and holy as well as merciful; and there is as much ground to fear that he will not forgive because he is just; as there can be to hope that he will because he is merciful. And thus it is impossible for a considering Man to satisfy his own Mind as to God's forgiving his Sins; unless he be some way assured from himself that he will do it. And therefore a particular  
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Revelation in this Case must be made, if God designs to bring Men to Repentance by the Hopes of Forgiveness. But meer Repentance can never make any satisfaction to God for the Breach of his Laws. Suppose a Sinner come to himself and is heartily sorry that he hath offended God so many ways, and with such aggravating Circumstances as he hath done; and now resolves in the Anguish of his Soul never more to return to the Practice of them; This no doubt, is far more pleasing to God, than going on to offend still; but all this is no more than a Man in justice to God and to himself is bound to do; for he is bound to vindicate the Honour of God's Laws, and to condemn himself for his own Folly, and to return no more to the Practice of it. But what amends is made by all this, for the infinite Dishonour which hath been done to God and his Laws by the Violation of them? The Courts of Justice among Men take no Notice of the Malefactor's Repentance; however he be affected, the Law must be observed, and Offenders punished. How then can any Persons be assured from meer Natural Reason, that God will not be as tender of the Honour and Justice of his Laws, as Mankind are allowed to be without any Imputation of Cruelty or Injustice?

If God should be exact in punishing Offenders, who could complain? For who can plead *Not-Guilty* before his Maker? And when a Man's own Conscience condemns him that he hath deserved Punishment, what Reason can he have from himself not to expect it? And if he doth justly expect to be punished, what reason can he have to hope for Forgiveness; since he knows that he deserves to be punished, and therefore can never deserve to be forgiven? It must be therefore a free Act of Grace and Mercy in God to forgive even penitent Sinners; and upon what Terms and in what Manner he will do it depends wholly upon his own Good-will. He may forgive Sins if he pleases, and it is agreeable to his Nature to do it, if Sinners do repent and forsake their Sins; but whether God hath actually made known to us the way of Reconciliation cannot be known by any Principles of Nature; because it is a Matter of Fact and must have such Proof as a thing of that Nature is capable of.

II. Having thus shewed, how strongly the Principles of Natural Religion do make way for entertaining this Point of the Christian Doctrine, as to *God's sending his Son into the World* in order to our Reconciliation with him and our Salvation by him; it remains now to shew how justly God doth require the Belief of it from us as true; for the next words tells us, *That he that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God, v. 18.*

This, some may say, is very hard Doctrine; for they believe as much as they can; and if they can believe no more it is no fault; for no Man can be bound to believe more than he can. I do not question but *Nicodemus* (to whom these words are generally supposed to be spoken by our Saviour) thought he had gone a great way, when he used those words to Christ, *v. 2. Rabbi we know that thou art a Teacher come from God, for no Man can do these Miracles that thou dost except God be with him.* i. e. He was willing to believe him some great Prophet whom God had sent; and this was a fair step for a Ruler among the Jews, who were generally very unreasonable Unbelievers. But Christ tells him plainly this would not do; for unless he believed him to be the on-  
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ly begotten Son of God, he could not be saved. And this is the great Point, That God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life, v. 16. Not, as though meer believing this were sufficient (for this carries a great many other things along with it) but that since God had sent his only begotten Son into the World upon such a Message, he did expect that he should be received and entertained as such upon their utmost peril.

But can we believe farther than we have Reason to believe? No; God doth not expect it from us, provided that with sincere and impartial Minds we set our selves to consider and weigh the Evidence and with great Humility beg the Assistance of Divine Grace, without which God may justly leave us to our Unbelief.

It would be too large a Subject now to lay open the several Arguments to prove that it is as evident, as a Matter of Fact can be made to us, that God did send his Son that the World through him might be saved; Therefore I shall only mention these two things.

1. That if the Matters of Fact are true concerning the History of *Christ's coming*, as related by the Evangelists, there can be no Reason to doubt his being *the Son of God*. For he that was the most exact Pattern of Humility and Self-denial; not only frequently assumes this Title to himself, and his most intimate Disciples affirm it of him; but God himself gave the most ample and convincing Testimony to it; by his miraculous Birth; and a voice from Heaven to that purpose at his Baptism; by a long Train and Series of Publick and useful Miracles to attest the Truth of his Doctrine; by his Resurrection from the Dead and Ascension into Heaven, and wonderfull Effusion of the Holy Ghost, with the strange Effects which followed it; so that no one who doth believe these things to be true can have any ground to say that he cannot believe Christ to be the Son of God.

2. That if these matters of Fact are not to be believed as true we cannot be bound to believe any thing but what we see our selves. For the Distance of Time and Place are equal in this Case; and no other matters of Fact are so well attested as these are. And so, as the Apostle saith of Christ's Resurrection, *If he be not risen our Faith is vain*; so in this Case I say if there be not Reason to believe these things *all Faith is vain*. For no other Matters of Fact, which we should be accounted Fools for not believing, have had such a sort of Testimony which these have had. For these things were not conveyed by a silent Tradition for some time till the chief Parties were dead who could either prove or disprove them; but they were publick and exposed to all manner of Examination; they were not deliver'd by one or two, who were trusted with a Secret, but openly avowed by a great Number of competent Witnesses, who were present; and none of them could be brought by the greatest Sufferings to deny, or falsify, or conceal any part of their Evidence; that when these things had been thus delivered by those who saw them, who were most remarkable for their Innocency and Integrity, in the next Ages they were examined and enquired into by Men of Sagacity and Learning, who upon the strictest Search found no reason to suspect their Testimony; and therefore heartily embraced and defended the Christian Faith. And from thence they have been conveyed down to us; not by an uncertain Oral Tradition, which can hardly hold the same from one End of the Town to another; but by unquestionable Writings; of such Authority, that

the Christians would rather die than deliver up their Books. And in these are all those Circumstances contained, which we are bound to believe as Christians; among which this is one of the chief, *that God sent his Son into the World for the Salvation of Mankind.*

To sum up all; I desire those who after all this pretend that they are willing to believe as much as they can, and those who are liable to any Suggestions of Infidelity, to consider seriously with themselves, whether there can be a greater and more noble Design, more becoming the Wisdom, Power and Goodness of God to carry on, than that of rescuing Mankind out of a miserable State, and putting them into a certain way of Eternal Happiness? Whether such a Design must not be discovered in some particular Age of the World, with all the Circumstances relating to it? Whether that Age were not the fittest of all others, wherein the most remarkable Prophecies were to be accomplished, as to the Coming of the *Messias*, while the second Temple was standing? Whether the Difficulties as to humane Testimonies be not equal to all Ages and Things? Whether because it is possible for all Men to deceive, it be reasonable to infer that all Men are deceived; and that there is nothing but Illusion and Imposture in the World; and that all Men lye and deceive for the sake of lying and deceiving? But if there be a Difference to be made between Men and between Testimonies, then we are to examine the different Characters of Truth and Falshood and give our Assent according to them. And if after the severest Examination we do not find sufficient Reason to believe *that God sent his Son into the World for the Salvation of Mankind*, upon such Testimonies as are given of it, we must conclude all Mankind to be made up of Fraud and Imposture; and that there is no such thing as Sincerity and Honesty in the World; or that if there be, it is not possible for others to discern it. Which are such fatal Reproaches upon humane Nature, that no one who pretends to any Regard to it can be guilty of. For if they be Universally true, they must condemn themselves; if not, we must see some very particular Reason why we should not rather think them deceived, than fix such an indelible Blot upon the Reputation of Mankind. And surely it is a great Advantage to the Truth of Religion to find, that it cannot be overthrown but by such Methods, as equally overturn all Truth and Certainty, and that the Faith of Christianity stands not only upon the same Bottom with the common Faith of Mankind. But if we reject such Assurance as is offer'd us for the Faith of the Gospel, our Infidelity cannot be the Effect of Reason and Argument, but of a causeless Suspicion and unreasonable Mistrust of the best part of Mankind. Who have most firmly believed the Truth of these things, and have led the most holy and exemplary Lives in hopes of a Blessed Immortality. And if the Testimony of any Persons deserve to be taken before others, it must be of such who could have no Design upon this World, but were resolv'd by Faith and Patience to prepare for a better.

To conclude. For us who believe and own the Truth of this great and fundamental Article of the Christian Faith, we have something else to do than meerly to vindicate and assert it. This at some times is more necessary than at others; and I heartily wish this were none of them. I am willing to hope the best of all who in such an Age of Infidelity have the Courage and Zeal to own the Faith of this Day; *viz. That God sent his Son into the World in order to the making us for ever happy.*

And I hope none who profess themselves Christians this Day will ever be discouraged by the Mocks and Flouts of Infidels, so as to let go the Anchor of their Hope, or mistrust the Foundation of their Faith. It is as great a piece of Wisdom to know when to believe, as when not to believe; and it is as certain an Argument of a weak Mind to be always doubting, as to be overforward in believing: For the Soil must be very bad that can bear no Foundation. But withal let us not flatter our selves only that we have a better Faith than others. For how miserable will our Case be, if we have nothing but a superficial Faith; and a sort of Anniversary Devotion. We can never thank God too much for the Blessing of this Day; but God expects something more from us, than merely the giving him solemn Thanks once a Year for *sending his Son into the World*. We must endeavour to answer the End of God's sending him, *i. e. to save us first from our Sins, and then from the wrath to come*. This is the Method which God himself hath appointed, not barely from his own Will and Pleasure, but from the necessary Order and Reason of Things. For, otherwise a Man might be rewarded for doing amiss, and punished for performing his Duty. If we therefore ever hope for any Benefit by this coming of Christ into the World, we must apply our Minds to consider seriously on what Conditions we may reasonably hope for Salvation by him. Can they think that Christ came to so little Purpose as to save Men in their Sins? If that were to be hoped, there had been no need of his coming; but it is a hard Work indeed to save us from them. The Guilt must be expiated, and the Power subdued; the former Christ hath done; but he expects, and with great Reason, that we should *deny ungodly and worldly Lusts, and work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*.

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# SERMON XXXII.

CONCERNING

## Sins of Omission,

Preached before the

# King and Queen

A T

# WHITE-HALL,

O N

March 18<sup>th</sup>, 169<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>. being Midlent-Sunday.

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St. JAMES IV. 17.

*Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is Sin.*

**A**lthough our Apostle in this Epistle calls the Gospel *the Law of Liberty*, yet to prevent any Misconstruction thereof, as though it allowed a *Liberty to sin*, we no where find more strict and severe Passages against it, than in this Epistle, both with respect to *Sins of Commission*, and *Sins of Omission*. As to *Sins of Commission*, his Expression seems hardly consistent with the Grace of the Gospel; *For whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all*. Hath the Law of Moses any thing more apt to terrifie the Consciences of Men, if not to drive them into despair, than this? It is not, *If one breaks the whole Law*, then it had been no wonder *if he were guilty of all*, even under the Gospel, which doth not take away the force of the Moral Law. But, *If he keep the whole Law; and yet offend in one Point; he is guilty of all*. How is this agreeable with the Equity of the Gospel, to make a Breach of *one Part* to be a *violation* of the whole Law? Since he cannot keep the Law, and break it at the same time;

and so far as he did keep it, he could not be guilty of the Breach of it; but, if *he offended but in one Point*, he must keep all the rest. It is not enough to say, that the Chain of the whole is broken, and the Authority of the Lawgiver contemned; for there is a great difference between breaking a Chain, and breaking it all to Pieces; there is no such Contempt in the Breach of one Command, as of all; and he that keeps all the rest, seems to shew more regard to his Authority in keeping the other Parts of the Law, than Contempt in that wherein he offends. What then is the Apostle's meaning? It is, that the Gospel doth not allow any wilful Breach of the Law of God in any one kind or sort whatsoever; as appears by the following words, *For he that said, Do not commit Adultery, said also, Do not kill; now if thou commit no Adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a Transgressor of the Law.* What is before said, that *he is guilty of all*, is here explained, that *he is a Transgressor of the Law.* This cannot therefore be understood of any sudden Act of Passion and Surprise, nor of any Failings as to the Manner of our Duties, but of a wilful, deliberate Practice of some one known Sin, although the Person may be careful to avoid many others; because this is not consistent with that Integrity of Mind, and that sincere Regard to God and his Laws, which every good Christian ought to have; and so being *guilty of the whole Law*, is to be understood with respect to the Favour of God; which can no more be expected where there is a wilful persisting in any one known Transgression of the Law than if he were *guilty of all.*

As to *Sins of Omission*; the words of the Text taken in their full Extent, have a very mortifying Consideration in them. For it is much easier to *know to do good*, than to practise it. It is hard for Men under the plain Precepts of the Gospel, not to *know how to do good*; but who is there that can say, *he doth all the good he knows*? We all know, we ought to *love God with all our heart and soul and strength, and our Neighbour as our selves*; yet who can pretend to do it in the utmost latitude and extent of our Duty? So that what St. Paul saith of the Law, is true of the Text, that *it concludes all under Sin.* For, as our Apostle Gal. 3: 12. saith, ch. 3: 2. *in many things we offend all.* And the more we know, the more we offend, as he tells us in these words, *To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.*

What Advantage then have we by the Gospel, since the more we know of our Duty, the worse our Condition is, if we do not practise it? and we know so much more to be our Duty than we can hope to practise; that this Expression seems to leave Mankind in a more deplorable Condition under the Light of the Gospel, than if we had never heard of it. For, if the Sin be aggravated by *knowing* our Duty, and *not doing it*, it must proportionably be lessened by having no Opportunities to know it.

Therefore, for the clearing the Sense of the Apostle in these words, and for the right understanding the just Measures of our Duty, and the due Aggravation of our Sins, it will be necessary to state and clear the Nature and Extent of *Sins of Omission*: Or to shew how far this Rule of the Apostle holds, *To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is Sin.*

*To do good* here, doth not barely imply something that is lawful and commendable, which it is some way in our *Power* to do; but that to which we are under some *Obligation*, so that it becomes *our Duty* to do

do it. For a *Sin of Omission* must suppose an *Obligation*; since every *Sin* must be a *Transgression of the Law*. But there are several sorts of things that are good; and there are different kinds of *Obligation*; and from hence arises the Difficulty of stating the Nature of *Sins of Omission*; which some are too little sensible of, and some too much.

But it is in it self a Subject of so important a Nature, and so seldom spoken to, that I shall at this time endeavour to clear it. And in order thereto we must enquire,

*Omissio non est nisi boni debiti ad quod aliquis tenetur, Aqu. 2. 3. 79. 3. & 1. 2. 6. 3. Reginald. Prox. l. 15. c. 2. u. 10.*

- I. Into that *Good* which we are obliged to do.
- II. The Nature of the *Obligation* we are under to do it.

I. As to the *Good* which we are obliged to do; that may be considered two ways.

1. With respect to God, and so it implies the Duty we owe, on the Account of the Relation we stand in to him.

2. With respect to one another; and so it implies not meer Duty but something beneficial and advantageous to others, which we are in a *Capacity* to do.

1. Our Duty with respect to God, is either,

1. That of our Minds, which lie in internal Acts, which we are bound to perform towards him.

2. That which consists in external Acts of Duty and Service to him.

1. The Duty which we owe to God in our Minds; which is, not barely to know him, but frequently to consider and think of him, as our Maker and Benefactor. It is a strange Incogitancy in Mankind to live, as *without God in the World*; to suffer the Cares and Thoughts and Business of this World to jostle God out of our Minds; whom we ought in the first place to regard. If we could free our Minds from that Disorder and Confusion they are under by the strong Impressions of sensible Objects, and the false Idea's of Imagination, they would think of nothing so freely, so frequently, so delightfully as the Divine Perfections. For God being the most perfect Mind; other Minds that are created by him, do naturally tend towards him as their Centre, and are uneasy and restless, like the Needle touched with the Load-stone, till they are fixed towards him. We meet with too many things which divert and draw them another way; but it is certainly one of the most necessary Duties lying upon us, to call back our Thoughts from too busie and eager a pursuit of Earthly things; and to fix them in the serious Thoughts of God and another World.

It is the Opinion of *Aquinas* and the older Casuists, that *assoon as ever any Person is come to the use of his Reason, he is not only bound to think of God, but to love him as his chief Good; and that it is the most dangerous Sin of Omission not to do it.*

*89. 6. Victor. Rel. 13. Navarr. Man. c. 11. n. 7. Tolet. Sum. l. 4. c. 9. Azor. T. 1. l. 9. c. 4. Gr. de Valent. To. 2. Disp. 6. Qu. 19. To. 3. Dis. 3. Qs. 19.*

The latter Casuists, who think this Doctrine too severe, as to the first use of Reason; yet cannot deny it to hold, *assoon as any come to the Knowledge of God*; if the want of knowing him be not through their own fault. Assoon as they know God, they confess, that they are bound to love him; but are they not bound to know him assoon as they are capable?

capable? What allowance may be made in the Cases of gross Ignorance or natural Stupidity we are not concerned to enquire; but we now speak of those who have all Advantages and Opportunities of knowing God betimes; and as to such their Ignorance is so far from being an Excuse, that it is their Sin. And that can never excuse from a Fault, but when it is no Fault to be Ignorant.

But, *Not to know God* when Persons know so many other things in the World besides him, is so much greater a Fault; because all those other things lead them to the Knowledge of him. So that I take it for granted, that no Man of Understanding can avoid the Knowledge of God, without shutting his Eye against the clearest Light; without darkening his Understanding by unreasonable Prejudices; without Confusion of Thought, and Perplexity of Mind; without groundless Imaginations, and ridiculous Suppositions; and most commonly not without very disorderly Passions and vicious Habits, which make the very Thoughts of God uneasy to his Mind.

But suppose we do own and believe a God, are we bound always to be thinking of him? Must we spend our time in Contemplation of him, and neglect all our Affairs here? If not, what are the bounds of our Duty which we may not omit without Sin?

There are two things which are necessary for us to do with respect to God in our Minds.

1. To have frequent and serious Thoughts of him; without which it will be impossible to keep our Minds in that temper which they ought to be in. For the Thoughts of God keep up a vigorous Sense of Religion, inflame our Devotion, calm our Passions, and are the most powerful Check against the Force of Temptations. And therefore we ought to allow our selves fit Times of Retirement for Recollection and Consideration; wherein we draw in our Thoughts from the Business and Impertinencies of this Life (and even these go a great way in that which looks like Business) that we may converse with God and our own Minds. And those who do not sometimes withdraw from the Noise and Hurry, the Dust and Confusion of this World, must be great Strangers both to God and themselves; and mind any thing rather than their chiefest Interest. But I am afraid there are too many among us, of whom the Psalmist's words are too true, *God is not in all their thoughts*; I wish there were not some who would make good another Reading of those words, *viz. All their thoughts are there is no God*. But I think not so much their deliberate Thoughts, as their *Wishes* and *Desires*. But those can never alter the Nature of things: and therefore the wisest thing they can do, is to make the Thoughts of God desirable to them; and that can be only by reconciling themselves to him by a hearty and sincere Repentance.

Psal. 10. 4.

2. We are always bound to have an habitual Temper and Disposition of Mind towards God. This is that which is commonly called the *Love of God*; and is opposed to the *Love of Sin*. Which doth not consist in sudden and transient Acts of Complacency and Delight in him; but in a firm Purpose and Resolution of Mind to obey him. The *Jews* think that the Fundamental Precept of the Law as to the *Love of God with all their heart and soul and strength*, goes no farther than that they should do that which the Law requires as to the Worship and Service of God. But certainly the Love of God must go deeper, and rise higher, or else it will never come up to the great Design of Religion; which is, not only

Dent. 6. 5.  
10. 12.

only to do those outward Acts of Service which he commands and expects from us; but to bring our Souls nearer to him, to make him our chief End; and to direct the Course of our Lives and the Acts of our Obedience in order to it.

Now this is a Duty towards God so necessary to our Happiness, that we must be always obliged to it, and at all times; although it be an *Affirmative Precept*. For the true Reason of the Difference of Obligation is from the *Nature of the Commands*, and not from the *Manner of Expressing* them either *Negatively* or *Affirmatively*. The Reason of the perpetual Obligation of *Negative* Precepts is, that it can never be lawful to do what God forbids; but it may be sometimes lawful to omit what he requires; because the *Circumstances* may make it not to be a Duty at that time. But when an *Affirmative* Precept is of that Nature, that no *Circumstances* can alter the Obligation of it, then it binds as much as a *Negative*. And so it is as to the Command of true Repentance, and turning from the Love of Sin, to the Love of God; for no Man can be in such *Circumstances* wherein he is not bound to do it.

But as to particular Acts of Repentance and of the Love of God, supposing that habitual Temper, the Obligation of them is according to the proper Seasons and Occasions of them. When a Sinner is conscious to himself of fresh Acts of Sin, he is bound to renew his Repentance, and the Omission of it adds to his Guilt; and when God calls Men to Repentance in a more than ordinary manner, by strong Convictions of Conscience; or some awakening Providence; or by some solemn Times of Fasting; he is guilty of a farther Aggravation of his Sin, if he neglects those Seasons of performing the proper Acts of Repentance.

But suppose we do know God, and have this habitual Love to him as our chief End, doth this come up to all that Mankind owes to God? Do we know him and love him and serve him as we ought to do? Do we not fail in the Manner and Degree of those very Duties which we in some Measure perform? And are not these Failings Omissions? And will not these Omissions be charged upon us as Sins? How then can Mankind hope to escape the Wrath of God against those who continue in the Practice of Sin?

To answer this, we must distinguish between *Omission* as a *Defect* and as a *wilful Sin*. We must say, as St. James doth, *In many things we offend all*; and in all things, I am afraid, we offend some way or other; *if God would be exact to mark what is done amiss*. But here lies the main Point as to this Matter, how far God will charge those things upon us as Omissions, which in us come rather from want of *Power* than of *Will* to do them? I do not mean of *Natural Faculties*, for those we have entire, but of *Moral Power*, i. e. of such a Measure of Divine Grace as will enable us to do things beyond the Imperfection and Infirmity of our present State; which, in this fallen Condition, is like that of a Man under a Dead-Palsie, who hath all the parts of a Man, but not the Power of moving them. And where God by his Grace doth recover Mankind to a new Life, yet there are such Remainders of the former Deadness upon us, as makes us unable to do that which we most desire to do; and do fail in the Manner of Performance, where we are sincere as to our Purpose and Design. But will God lay these moral Defects, or Infirmities of our corrupt Nature on us as wilful Sins now under the Gospel?

Gospel? God forbid. I do not question God's Right to command us all that which is just in it self, and he hath given us Faculties to do; but I consider him as a gracious Lord towards a decayed Tenant, of whom, if he be willing to pay what he is able, *he will not exact the uttermost Farthing*; As a compassionate Commander to a wounded Soldier, who is willing to accept what Service he is able to do, although he fails in many Points of his Duty; As the good Samaritan, which poured in *Wine and Oil* into the Wounds which he had not made; and discharged *the Debt* which he had not contracted. If God were not infinitely gracious and merciful, there were little hopes for us to avoid Punishment; but since he is pleased to deal with us upon the Terms of a new Covenant, we have reason to hope that he will not charge *Involuntary Neglects* and *Moral Disabilities* upon us, as *Sins of Omission*.

2. There are *Duties of External Worship and Service* owing to God; and how shall we know when the *Omission* of these becomes a Sin to us? For these are not always necessary, and sometimes we may be hindered from them.

To answer this, I lay down these Rules;

I. A constant or habitual Neglect of those Duties which God hath appointed for his Worship and Service, cannot be without a Sin of Omission; because, that must arise from an evil Temper and Disposition of Mind. When it comes from a Contempt of God and his Service, it must be a Sin, because the Reason of it is a very great one. When it comes barely from a careless, indifferent, slothful Temper, which is glad of any Excuses for the Neglect or Omission of them; it argues very little Sense of Religion, or Regard to God and his Service, when they are so ready to find an Excuse for their Fault.

But some are ready to justify themselves in such a Neglect, as though all the outward Worship of God were meer Ceremony, and only a decent way of entertaining the People with some outward Pomp and Shew of Devotion towards a *Divine Majesty*.

I am afraid, such hardly mention a *Divine Majesty*, but in a Complement; however, we are willing to believe that they do own such a *Being*, but they think it a vain thing to serve him; as though he could be moved by our Prayers to him, or Praises of him. We do not deny that God is infinitely above all our Services: But is that a Reason why we should not serve him in the way he requires it from us? He doth not want our Services, but we want his Favour and Blessings; and can we expect them, when we slight that little Service, in comparison of the time he allows for other Employments, which he expects from us? If we had nothing but the Light of Nature to direct us, we should conclude it very reasonable that Mankind should own their Creator, by some outward, and publick, and stated Ways and Times of Worship. For this is no more than natural Justice to own our Maker and Benefactor; and can it become less necessary, when he hath declared himself pleased with the Performance of them, and made great Promises to those who call upon him?

But this, say they, is the greatest Difficulty of all, to understand what Effect our Prayers can have upon the Eternal Counsels of Heaven; since they are already fixed and cannot be reversed by our Prayers.

As great as this Difficulty is, the true Point of it is only this; Whether we are to believe and trust the frequent and repeated Promises of God, altho' we are not able to comprehend, how the Efficacy of our Prayers is taken in, as a necessary Condition towards the Execution of God's Eternal Purposes. For, if they are Conditions, as the Scripture often tells us; then we may easily understand what is meant by the Efficacy of Prayers; and as to the manner of reconciling such contingent Conditions with God's Eternal Purposes; it is a Difficulty which will afford perpetual Matter of Dispute, but ought no more to hinder us from plain Duties, than a Man should be from going a necessary Journey, till he be satisfied whether the Earth moves about the Sun, or the Sun about the Earth.

II. Whether the Omission of such publick Duties of Divine Worship be a Sin or not, depends very much on the *Reason and Occasion* of it. For if it be a wilful Neglect, it doth imply a Degree of Contempt, and that cannot be without Sin. And that is a wilful Neglect, when nothing but an Act of a Man's own Will hinders him from serving God in publick: I do not mean only at the very time, but if he hath by some former Act of his Will brought an Incapacity upon himself, that want of Power doth not excuse, when the Impotency arises from a voluntary Act of his own. If it be intended on purpose to hinder, it is as wilful in its Cause, as if there were no such Impediment. For, although the actual Impediment be the immediate Cause of the Omission; yet it is the Design and Purpose which makes it wilful. But if Persons by an Act of Providence without their own Fault be hindred from the Worship of God as by long Sickness; no one can say, that this Omission is wilful, and therefore cannot be accounted a Sin. But if a Person by his Intemperance and Debauchery hath brought himself into an Incapacity of attending on the Service of God; we cannot say that the actual Omission was wilful; but we may justly say, that the original Cause was so; and that it cannot excuse the Omission.

II. But besides the Duties which we owe to God; there are such which we owe to one another, which cannot be omitted without Sin. But here the stating of the Case seems yet more difficult, since there is not so plain an Authority to oblige, nor such a Relation to each other, as we stand in to God. And besides the Circumstances of humane Affairs are oftentimes so intricate and perplexed, that it is very hard for Persons to know their Duties, and much more to practise them.

But there are certainly such Duties, which we owe both *to the Publick and to one another*; and it may be of some Use to us to understand the force of the Obligation, and what those are which cannot be *Omitted without Sin*.

I. *As to the Publick*; and concerning that, we may take Notice of two Rules;

I. Those Duties cannot be omitted without Sin, which cannot be omitted without Prejudice to the publick Good. By which I do not mean any fanciful Notions, or Pretences to it, but the true and real publick Interest of the Nation; which consists in the Preservation of our Religion and Laws. The main Duty of this kind, which I shall insist upon; is the laying aside all Heats and Animosities and Distinctions of Parties, and minding and carrying on that which is the undoubted common Interest of us all. What is the meaning of all those

Jealousies and Suspitions which are among us, when we all profess to own the same Religion; the same Laws, and the same Government?

This is a very melancholy Subject to speak of; for this unseasonable Difference of Parties among our selves, is like a flaming Meteor in the Air, we can hardly keep our selves from looking upon it; and yet cannot behold it without some kind of Terror and Amazement. It is disputed among the Casuists, whether if a Man sees two Men fighting with each other, he be bound to part them to his own hazard; and the general Resolution is, that if he be in a private Capacity he is not; but in a publick he is. I hope the publick Capacity, I appear in here at this time, will excuse my interposing to allay such Heats and Animositities as are not only of dangerous Consequence, but great Sins. And therefore, unless I would be guilty of omitting a Duty my self, I must (and will) lay open the Mischief of such divided Interests as the Difference of Parties carries along with them.

When God had given Children to *Rebekah*, while they were yet unborn, and in their Mother's Womb, she found them struggling within her to such a Degree as made her in a Consternation to cry out, *If it be so, why am I thus?* i. e. If God hath given me these Children for Blessings, What is the meaning of this *strugling* between them? And it is said, her Concernment was so great, *that she went to enquire of the Lord.* Some think that *Melchisedek* was still living at *Salem*, and that she went to him, to consult about the Consequence of it; and he was a very proper Person for it, for he was *King of Righteousness* and *King of Peace*. And those are the best Antidotes against the Struglings and Animositities of those who have the same common Interest and Obligations. We need not to consult any Oracle in this Case; for *St. Paul* hath told us that, *if we bite and devour one another*; not like Canibals, but like different Parties, living in Hatred and Malice and Animosity to each other; take heed, saith he, *that ye be not consumed one of another.* As if he had said, Things cannot always continue at this pass; the inward Fires, if not suppressed, will break out at last, and in Probability end in your mutual Destruction.

Nothing hath more puzzled the Wits of Men in this inquisitive Age, than to give an Account of the Ebbing and Flowing of the Sea; but a great Man of our Nation hath told us, that we need not run to the Moon, or other remoter Causes; for the true Reason of it is nothing else but the clashing of the Waters of two mighty Seas crossing each other; and therefore, where there are no such contrary Motions, there is no such *Ebbing* and *Flowing*. We have too much of this *Ebbing* and *Flowing* upon Land, both as to our Condition and Expectation. But whence comes it? Is it not from two Parties among us crossing and striving to overtop and overpower each other? And till we unite and join in the same common Current, we have little cause to hope for a State of Peace and Tranquility. Our Saviour tells us, *a Kingdom divided against it self cannot stand.* I need not tell you of what Kingdom he speaks; but it was such a one, where there would be no Subtilty or Diligence wanting in the several Parties as to carrying on their Designs; but he looks on an united common Interest so necessary to the Preservation of Government, that he declares, that no kind of Society can be supported without it. If we then regard the Interest of our Nation or of our Religion; if we would avoid the Shame and and Reproach of destroying by our Divisions, what we pretended to

value



value above our Lives; we must lay aside our mutual Jealousies and Suspicions; we must abate our Heats and Animosities; we must unite and join in *the things that belong to our Peace*. But if they be hid from our eyes; then I am afraid what St. Paul said of the Gospel may be too truly applied to the things of our Peace; if they be hid, they are hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this World hath blinded their eyes. For it is too apparent, that the true ground of the Contention of the several Parties, is not matter of Conscience or Religion, or the common Interest of the Nation, but about Power and Superiority over each other; which, if it be carried on, in humane Probability can end in nothing but mutual Destruction. Which God of his Mercy prevent.

II. Men cannot without Sin omit the doing those Duties which their Places do require from them. For those are intended for a publick Benefit.

Those who study to be quiet, and to do their own business, are not only the best Christians, but the best Instruments of the publick Good. Whereas, Men of turbulent, restless and ambitious Minds; who make abundance of Noise and Clamour, are like Wasps, always flying and buzzing about, and very angry and peevish and discontented; but are nothing so usefull as the more silent and industrious Bees; which make the best of every thing, and serve the common Interest by it.

Every Society of Men is a Body made up of Head and Members knit and compacted together by Joints and Bands; but all have their several Uses and Functions, and while these are duly performed, the whole is preserved; but if the Feet should mutiny against the other Parts, because they bear the Burden of the whole; or the Stomach, that it is loaded and oppressed with what serves for the Nourishment of all; or the Head, that it must direct and contrive and manage all; what would the Effect be of such Complaints and Discontents at their own share, but that the whole Body must suffer by them. While all the Materials of a Building are kept in their due Place and Order, the whole is strengthened and supported; but if they start out of their places and stumble one upon another, the whole must fall.

There are always some who love to carry on their own ends under publick pretences; and if those be not attained, they matter not what becomes of all other Interests, although their own must suffer with the rest. These are like the Ivy to a flourishing Tree, which seems to embrace it and stick close to it, but it is for its own Advantage; but at the same time, it weakens it and hinders its growth, and if it falls, it must perish together with it.

But there are others, who by the very Duties of their Places are bound to regard the Publick and the Good of others; and when they do it not, they are certainly guilty of Sins of Omission in a high Degree. For every such Place is a Trust from God, of which an Account must be given; and a Sacred and Solemn Obligation goes along with them; so that there can be no Sins of Omission in such Cases, without Sins of Commission of as high a Nature as Breach of Trust, and of the most solemn Obligations. The truth is, the World is so humour-some and fantastical a thing, that it will hardly endure to be made better; so that those who have the greatest Zeal and Resolution to do good, are extremely discouraged in it, when they find so many Objections and Difficulties; such Frowardness and Perverseness in some,

such Remifness and Coldness in others, such an Universal *Lassitude and Indifferency* that it is enough to check the best Inclinations that way, and to make them leave the World to be managed as it will. And there are some *Seasons* wherein it is much harder to *do good* than in others. Such I mean, when Wickedness and Vice have corrupted the very Principles of Men's minds; when they account it a Piece of Wit to be profane, and a higher sort of Breeding to despise Religion and Vertue; when some are ready to pervert the best Designs, and mix such mean and sinister Ends of their own with them, and thereby blast them, that they come to nothing; when others will not endure that good may be done, unless they may have the sole doing of it, and endeavour to lessen the Reputation of all who are *not altogether such as themselves*; When all imaginable Arts are used to make Government contemptible; and the best purposes ineffectual; Lastly, when any who are bound to carry on the publick Good, account it Wisdom to do little or nothing in their Places, and take all possible Care to disoblige no Body by doing their Duties, for fear of Evil Consequences; I say, when such Seasons do happen, there is a very melancholy Prospect of Affairs, and little Hopes of *doing* or of *seeing God*.

II. I now proceed to the *Good* which we are to do with respect to others of the same Nature and in a worse Condition than our selves; and therefore need our help and Assistance. This is so remarkable a Sense of *doing Good*, that it hath almost appropriated the Name to it self; as *Good Works* are generally taken for Works of Charity. These are such as all agree, that they cannot be wholly omitted without Sin; but the Difficulty lies in stating the Measure and Seasons of the Obligation to them. Concerning which, these Rules may be observed:

1. That the Measures of Duty in this Case are very different, according to the different Circumstances and Conditions of Persons. For, although the standing general Rules of our Duty are fixed and unalterable; yet the particular Obligations depend upon great variety of Circumstances, as to those who are to do and to receive Good. If the easiness of Persons Conditions in the World will afford their laying by a constant Stock of Charity, it will be always in readiness for such Occasions, when we would be more willing to do good if it were in our Power; but it is hardly possible to make such Rules which may not give Occasions for trouble to scrupulous Minds, when they do not strictly observe them. But we are all so far bound to do good to those in want, that the not doing it according to our Abilities and Opportunities, is such a Sin of Omission as is inconsistent with true Christianity; but of those, every Person is left to judge; but so, as he must give an Account of it at the Great Day. For, it is observable, that our Saviour speaking of the Proceedings then, particularly mentions the *Sins of Omission* with respect to the doing good to others.

2. There are particular Seasons, when a greater Measure of *doing good* is required than at others: *i.e.* When Persons suffer for Religion and a good Conscience; when the Necessities of People are more general and pressing; When great Objects of Charity are certainly known to our selves and concealed from others; When a present Relief puts them into a way of *doing good* for themselves; When God hath *done good* to us after a more remarkable Manner than he hath to others; When we *do the more Good*, because we have done so much Evil; and thereby manifest

manifest the sincerity of our Repentance, by bringing forth such Fruits worthy of Amendment of Life; When our Calling and Profession is to *do good*; and we are bound to give the best Examples to others according to our Abilities; When our Religion suffers by not *doing good*, and our Faith is questioned for want of *good Works*; Lastly, When there are no such Natural Drains of Charity, as Children and near Relations which need our Assistance; in these and many other Instances of a like Nature, there is so much greater Obligation to the *doing good*, that it cannot be omitted without Sin.

II. I now come in the last place, to consider the *Nature* of the *Obligation* we lye under to do the Good we know. And the Reason of considering this, is from the Comparison of several Duties with one another; for we may be bound to several things at the same time, but we cannot perform them together; and the Difficulty then is to understand, which of these Duties we may omit without Sin.

And the Comparison may be threefold;

1. As to the Nature of the Duties.
2. As to the Authority which enjoyns them.
3. As to the particular Obligation we are under to them.

1. As to the Nature of our Duties. For there are several kinds of things that are *good*; and we are to have a different Regard to them. Some things are good because they are commanded; and some things are commanded, because they are good; and even God himself allows us to make a Difference between these, when himself saith, *I will have* Hof. 6. 6. *Mercy, and not Sacrifice*; although he required both; but if it happens that both cannot be done, then he prefers the former, although his own Honour seems more concerned in the latter. Our Saviour extends this Rule to *Mercy* on the Souls of Men; and to *Mercy* on our Bodies, even out of the Case of urgent or extreme Necessity, which cannot be pleased in the Apostle's Case of *plucking the Ears of Corn on the Sabbath-day*. Matt. 9. 13. 12. 7. But from hence we have ground to infer, that when two Duties interfere with one another, we are bound to prefer the greater and more substantial Duty, and then the Omission of the lesser is no Sin.

2. As to the Authority which requires them. There is no question, but when the Authority of God and Man do contradict each other, *God is to be obeyed rather than Man*. But the Authority of God's Command is not equally clear in all Cases; for some things are required plainly and directly, and some things by consequence and parity of Reason; some things are declared and enforced by the Gospel, others left to our own Deductions and Inferences; some things are made positive Commands for all Ages, others are reported by way of Example, but that Example understood by the Church to have the force of a Command; now, in all these and other like Cases, we ought to have the greatest regard to plain, positive, moral and perpetual Commands; but withall, to have a due regard to consequential and useful Duties, especially where the Church of God hath always so understood them, which is the best Interpreter of such doubtfull Cases, where the Sense of it is truly delivered to us.

3. As to the *Obligation* we are under; and that is three-fold. 1. That of *Nature*, which is, to act according to Reason; and none can question that but those who question, whether there be any such Principle as Reason in Mankind; and whosoever do so, have Reason to begin at home.

home. 2. Of *Christianity*, which supposes and enforces that of Nature, and superadds many other Duties which we are bound to perform as Christians. 3. Of our *several Relations*, and particular *Employments*. As to the former, we are under great Obligations from God and Nature and Christianity, to do the Duties which belong to us in them. As to the latter, they commonly require a stricter Obligation by Oath, to do those things which otherwise we are not bound to do. But being entred into it by a voluntary Act of our own, we cannot omit such Duties without Sin, but where the Circumstances of things do supersede the Obligation.

Thus I have gone through, as clearly and distinctly as I could, the most usefull Cases relating to *Sins of Omission*; it remains now, that I make some *Application* to our selves.

When we reflect on our Lives and Actions, our *Sins of Commission* are apt to terrifie our Consciences, and make us very apprehensive of the Wrath of God; but how few are any ways concerned for their *Sins of Omission*, viz. For not discharging the Duties of their Places, for not doing the Good they might and ought to have done, for not serving God with Diligence and exemplary Devotion, for not having their Minds so fixed and intent upon him as they ought to have on their Creator and Preserver and Redeemer? In a very corrupt Age not to be remarkable for *doing Evil* is a kind of Saintship; but how few are remarkable for *doing Good*? And yet that is one of the best Characters of Saintship. How much time is squandred away in Vanity and Folly? And yet, how is that grudged which is spent in the Worship of God? O what a burthen it is to serve God, and spend any time in Devotion! How many Excuses and Pretences of Business will such make rather than attend upon religious Duties, which themselves would judge very frivolous in other Matters? And will God and Conscience be satisfied with such unequal Dealing, such notorious Partiality? Let us deal faithfully and sincerely with our selves; Are we as ready to serve God as to serve our Lusts and Pleasures? Have we the same regard to his Worship that we have to any thing we really love and esteem?

If not, there must be something very much amiss in the Temper and Disposition of the Mind; and we are highly concerned to look into it. I do not speak now of *casual* and *accidental Omissions* of some particular Duties at some times; but of a *general* Unconcernedness about matters of Religion, as though they were either too high in the Speculation, or too mean and low in the Practice of them; or at least, that it is no great matter one way or other, whether they mind them or not. This, I am afraid, is too much the Temper of the Age we live in; which seems to be sinking into a strange *Indifferency* about Religion. It is possible for persons to have a Zeal against some corrupt Opinions and Practices in Religion; and yet to have no true Zeal or Concernment for Religion it self. For they may so much hate being imposed upon by false Pretenders, that carry on an Interest and Faction, under the Shew of Religion, as from thence to suspect all Religion to be nothing else; which is as unreasonable, as for a Man to conclude, that all Merchants and Jewellers are Cheats, and that there are no such things (nor can be) as true Diamonds in the World, because he hath fallen into the hands of such as would have cheated him with those which were counterfeit. And it is common with such who design to deceive, that what they want in *Sincerity*, they make up with *Confidence*. This is a  
good

good Argument for caution and looking about us ; but it is none at all for our indifferency about Matters of Religion. For it is not here, as in Jewels, which are fine things to look upon ; but the Happiness of Life doth not depend upon them. But would any one let alone things necessary to the Support of Life, because Poison may be put into them? We may take care to prevent it ; but we must have the Necessaries of Life ; and it would be great Folly to die for want of Sustenance, for fear of being poysoned.

If we have no true Love to God and Religion, we must perish ; for there is no hopes of Salvation without it. And if we go on in a careless Indifferency about God and his Service ; If we do not do our Endeavours for suppressing Wickedness and Vice ; if we do not mind Religion our selves, nor are encouraging it in others, it will shew that we have not that Love of God and Religion which we ought to have.

Therefore, if we regard the Honour of God, our own Salvation ; the Duties of our Places, the Interest of the Nation, and the Satisfaction of all that are wise and good, we must shake off all this Coldness and Indifferency about Religion, and apply our selves heartily and sincerely to promote the great Ends of it ; which are, to make Persons good in this World, and happy in another.

*Which God of his Mercy grant, &c.*

S E R-

# SERMON XXXIII.

Preached at

## WHITE-HALL,

Before the

## Princesses of Denmark,

O N

February the 11<sup>th</sup>. 168<sup>6</sup><sub>7</sub>.

St. MATTH. XXVI. 41.

*Watch and Pray that ye enter not into Temptation ;  
the Spirit indeed is willing, but the Flesh is weak.*

**T**Hese words were spoken by our Saviour, to his Disciples, at a critical time, when they were just *entring into Temptation*, but they were very little apprehensive of it, and of their Inability to withstand it. Like *Jonas*, they were fallen asleep when the Storm was gathering about them, and did not imagine they were so near being cast into a rough and tempestuous Sea. It was but a little before, *Ver. 26.* that Christ had entertained them at the proper Banquet of the *Messias*, (which the Jews speak so much of) but not such a one as they fancied, made up of the greatest Delicacies and Varieties of Meats and Drinks; but at a Supper of his own appointing, where ordinary Bread and Wine were made use of to set forth the most unvaluable Kindness, which was ever manifested to the world, in his now approaching Agonies, and suffering on the Cross for the Expiation of the Sins of it.

One would have thought, the very mention of *the shedding of his Blood*, *Ver. 28.* should have startled and amazed, and confounded the Spirits of his few, weak, and concerned Disciples, who placed all their Happiness and Comfort in the Presence and Safety of their beloved Lord. Especially, when he took his solemn leave of them after this Supper, in that admirable Discourse related by St. *John*, which he concludes with that most Divine Prayer, *Chap. 17.* But all this made no great Impression upon them at that time; not through any natural dulness or stupidity;

stupidity; but they were so possessed with an Opinion of his Power and Wisdom to free himself from Danger and Suffering, and they had seen so many Experiments of it, that they could not believe it till they saw him actually betrayed and carried away. For when he told them, as they were going up to *Jerusalem*, that he should be *betrayed, condemned, mocked and scourged and crucified*; the Evangelist saith, *They understood none of these things*; i. e. they took all that relates to the greatness of his Sufferings, and his Departure from them, to be some deep Mystery and Allegory, which their Capacities could not comprehend, and that because of his Figurative and Parabolical way of speaking; as when he said, *He would not henceforth drink of the fruit of the Vine, until he drank it new with them in the Kingdom of Heaven*. They could not tell, but the shedding his Blood might be as Figurative an Expression as this was.

Our Saviour perceiving them to be still so secure and inapprehensive, after the usual Hymn at the end of the Passover, he takes them out to accompany him to a Garden near the Mount of *Olive*s, whither as *St. John* saith, *He often resorted with his Disciples*. As they were going along our Saviour tells them more plainly, that very night such a wonderful Alteration would happen among them, that they who now seemed to value him above all the World, and to rejoyce in nothing but his Presence, would shamefully forsake him and disown him, *All ye shall be offended because of me this night*; *St. Peter* had so little mistrust of himself, that he boldly answered, *Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended*. Our Saviour pitied him for his Weakness and Presumption; and withall tells him, though he thought so well of himself then, he would fall the first and the foulest of any; *Jesus* said unto him, *Verily I say unto thee, that this night before the Cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice*. Yet such was *St. Peter's* Confidence of himself by reason of his present warmth and resolution, that he replies, with great assurance, *Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee*. It was bravely said, and no doubt at that time he meant as he spake. But this Resolution was not peculiar to him; for the rest of the Disciples expressed the same. *Likewise also said all the Disciples*. Never did persons seem better resolved than these; there was no Hypocrisie, or False-heartedness, no Artifice or Design in all this; they verily believed themselves, and did not in the least question, but they could as readily die for Christ at that time, as they could live with him. But our Blessed Lord was more sensible of their Weakness, than they were themselves; he knew what a sudden change his Apprehension and Arraignment would cause in their Minds; how their Passions would be too strong for their Resolutions; and they who so lately had declared *they would die with Christ*, could not have the heart to stand by him: Therefore, although his own Sufferings came on very fast upon him, and seized first upon his Mind, when he said, *My Soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death*; and pray'd in that passionate manner to be delivered, when he fell on his Face and said, *O my Father, if it be possible let this Cup pass from me*, &c. yet he was so concerned for his poor Disciples that were so little apprehensive of their danger that they were fallen asleep in the Garden; that in the midst of his own Agonies he rouses them up, and gently awakes them, for their unseasonable Drowsiness, *What, could ye not watch with me one hour?* and immediately subjoins this short Exhortation.

*Watch and pray that ye enter not into Temptation.* From which words, we may consider;

(1.) The Insufficiency of mere present Resolutions without Watchfulness and Prayer.

(2.) The Reason of that Insufficiency from the weakness of the Flesh, joyned with the willingness of the Spirit.

(3.) The necessity arising from hence of *Watchfulness and Prayer*.

But before I come to these Particulars, it will be necessary to give some account of what is meant by *entering into Temptation* here; which implies one of these two things: Either,

(1.) That they might be kept from extraordinary Tryals, which seems to be meant in the Lord's Prayer, when we say, *lead us not into Temptation.* For to Tempt in general is no more than to Try; and a state of Temptation is a state of Tryal; to pray therefore that we may not be put into a state of Temptation, is to pray our selves out of this World, which was designed by Almighty God for a state of Tryal in order to another World. Therefore when we pray not to be led into Temptation, the meaning is, that God by his wise Providence would keep us from such Tryals, which according to the ordinary measures of Grace we should hardly be able to withstand. For, although it be possible for those to whom God gives extraordinary Assistance, not only to resist the Temptation but to triumph over it, and to shake off Temptations as St. Paul did the Viper from his hand; on which account St. James saith to such Heroic Christians, *My brethren count it all joy when ye fall into divers Temptations.* And, *Blessed is the Man which endureth Temptation,* &c. Yet, considering the frailty of humane Nature, and that God is not obliged to give extraordinary Assistance in difficult Cases, it is a Wise and becoming Petition for us to our heavenly Father, that he would not lead us in this manner into Temptation, or as our Saviour here expresses it, *To pray that we enter not into Temptation.*

Jams 1. 2,  
12.

(2.) But because our Saviour very well knew that his Disciples were so suddenly *to enter into Temptation* in the former Sense; and because it is not fit for us to set Bounds to God's infinite Wisdom with respect to our Condition, therefore there is a farther meaning in this Expression, *viz.* That if it seems fitting to him who hath the Power and Right to dispose of us, to single us out for great Temptations, or more than ordinary Trials of our Constancy or Resolution, that then he would give such supplies of his Grace and Holy Spirit as may enable us to withstand the force of the Temptation, so, as we be not overcome by it.

And these two take in the whole sense of this Expression, *That ye enter not into Temptation.* We are allowed to pray to be kept out of it; but we are bound to pray and to watch too, lest we fall by the Power of Temptation, which is then done when the Motives proper to this World prevail over those which relate to another. The Motives of another World are those of a future and eternal Happiness; the Motives of this World are those of present Pleasure, Honour and Riches; and when these come to be inconsistent with our Duty, or apt to draw us from it, they are said to be Temptations to us. For no Sin of it self is a *Temptation*, but something else to be enjoyed by the Commission of Sin; or which cannot be enjoyed without it. As in the Case here mentioned by our Saviour of St. Peter's denying his Master; there was no Temptation in the Sin it self; for what was there in an Act so mean, so shameful, so ungrateful to tempt him to commit it, but it was the desire



desire of his present Safety, and the fear of running into the same Danger, in which he saw his Lord, which was the Temptation to him. The Sins of Luxury and Intemperance, that of *Riot and Drunkenness, of Chambring and Wantonness*, are not Temptations in themselves; Rom. 13. 13. but the sensual Pleasure which accompanies them, though it be forbidden, is apt to draw the Lovers of it from the strict Rules of Sobriety and Chastity. It is the love of this World, *i. e.* of the Riches and Honours of it, which make the sins of Ambition and Covetousness so plausible and prevailing among those who profess to believe another world. Their Souls are like a piece of Iron between two Load-stones of an unequal magnitude and distance; the one is far greater, and hath more force in it self to attract, but it is placed at a far greater distance; the other is much less but very near, and therefore may more powerfully draw, than that which is more forcible but farther off. I do not think, that all those who commit Sin by the Power of Temptation are presently Infidels and dis-believe another world; but, although they do believe the Happiness of another Life, yet it is at a distance, it is out of their view and beyond their apprehension; and therefore doth not work so effectually, as present, visible, sensible Delights do; which have all the advantage of suitableness to our present State, of Familiarity, Nearness, and Insinuation. It is the great Excellency and Usefulness of Faith, that by it we not only believe the things of another world, but that it makes things future to be to us, as if they were present, and things invisible to have such an influence, as if they were visible; and therefore, the Apostle calls it, *The substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.* Heb. 11. 1. Invisible things must have a real Being, before they can be believed; and there must be evidence to the Mind before there can be true Faith; how then can Faith be the Substance and Evidence of things future and possible. I answer, That *ὑπόστασις* doth not merely signify a real Being in opposition to Fancies and Chimera's; but a firm, solid and permanent Being; therefore things which are passing, even as Time and Motion, are said to be *ἀυτοῦσαστα* things that had no Consistence or Hypostasis; and being applied to the Mind, it signifies a firm and unshaken Confidence, and inward satisfaction of the Truth of Divine Revelation, an assured Expectation of what God hath promised; and from hence arises that influence which Faith hath on the Minds of Men, in resisting the Temptations of this World. With respect to another world. Therefore the two great Principles which govern Mankind, are Faith and Sense; while they are acted by the former, they are said to resist Temptation; when they are sway'd by Sense as it is opposed to Faith, and includes in it the Motives of this World, then they are said to give way to Temptation, or to be overcome by it. And so I come to consider,

(1.) The Insufficiency of present Resolution, to keep us from the Power of Temptation without Watchfulness and Prayer. It is hard to imagine a greater Instance of a firm present Resolution, than there was in St. Peter and the rest of the Apostles; nor a sadder example of the Insufficiency of it; which ought to make us *hear and fear, and not be too presumptuous.*

Resolution is certainly one of the best means in the World to withstand Temptations to sin, for it hath these Advantages.

(1.) It keeps the Mind steady and fixed, and therefore prepared to resist a Temptation when it comes. Whereas an irresolved Mind leaves

a Man open to the first Assault. It is like disputing in a Garrison who shall Command, when the Enemy is at the Gates. A fixed and settled Mind in Religion is of mighty consequence against all Temptations; for then every thing is in order for resisting when Reason governs the Mind, and the Mind determines the Will, and the Will stands bent and resolved upon that, which upon due Consideration appears to conduce most to our eternal Happiness.

(2.) It takes off the false Colours and Appearances of things; for every thing may be represented plausibly to an irresolute Mind. Temptations to Sin would never be called so, if there were not something tempting in them; and whatever is tempting must have a free appearance in one respect or other; and while a person is irresolved, he suffers all the force of Temptation to come upon him. But a resolved Mind keeps it at a distance, and so breaks the Power of it; whereas he who lets go his Resolution and treats with a Temptation, is like one who plays with a Tarantula and is bitten before he is aware of it.

But there are two sorts of Resolutions.

(1.) Some that are sudden and made in a heat and passion; without due Consideration and weighing of things; and such as these are of no great force or continuance. And it is often seen that the same heat which caused the Resolution to be made proves the occasion of breaking it, when it is carried another way. The inconstancy of their Temper makes them resolve, hoping thereby to bind up themselves the faster; but Nature and Temptations soon grow too hard for such Resolutions, which are made only by a sudden Passion.

(2.) There are others which are made about matters of plain Duty, and against known Temptations to Sin; after a due sense of our own Folly and Weakness, and a firm Purpose never more to return to the practise of Sin. And these are Wise and Pious, as well as serious and deliberate Resolutions; such no doubt the Disciples of Christ had, when they left all and followed Christ; besides this sudden Resolution they took up, that they would rather die with Christ than deny him. Yet taking altogether our Saviour tells them, *They ought to watch and pray that they enter not into Temptation*; and he gives the Reason for it in the following words, *The Spirit indeed is willing, but the Flesh is weak.*

(2.) In which words he gives an account of the reason of the Inconstancy, and Insufficiency of good Resolutions, *viz.* that although the *Spirit be willing*, yet there is something we carry about us, which weakens our best Resolutions, and betrays us into Temptations; our *Flesh is weak* which being so near us, as to be a part of our selves, makes our Case more dangerous, and enforces the necessity of Watchfulness and Prayer.

But here arises one of the most useful, necessary and important Cases that relates to practical Christianity; which I shall first set down in its full force, and then endeavour to clear it.

The Case is this; how far, and in what Circumstances the weakness of the Flesh doth lessen the guilt of Sin, which is committed by it?

If it be not an Extenuation of the Sin, why doth our Saviour mention it in such a manner? And if it be, then these Inconveniencies follow;

(1.) It seems to abate the necessity of our Care and Watchfulness, if the Sin be lessened through the weakness of the Flesh, which is unavoidable in this imperfect State.

(2.) It

(2.) It seems to be a fair Plea and Excuse for the greatest part of the Sins of Mankind. For,

(1.) The Original inclination to Sin in Mankind, comes from *the weakness of the Flesh*; the very frame of humane Nature being such as exposes them to continual Temptations. There is a natural Combat between the Flesh and the Spirit; for *the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other*, as the Apostle speaks; and all Mankind find it too true: Now where- Gal. 5. 17.  
ever the Flesh is, there are Inclinations agreeable to it, and these being contrary to the Dictates of the Mind, all the Sins of the Flesh will appear to come from the weakness of the Flesh.

(2.) The frequent Commission of the same Sins will be laid upon the weakness of the Flesh. For the generality of Mankind do not sin out of defiance to God or his Laws, or with an obstinate Resolution to sin; for, they know their Duty, and wish they could perform it; but alas! The Flesh is too hard for the Spirit in them. They have many Convictions in their Minds, many good Purposes, and serious Resolutions at some times; and if they do sin it is not with their whole Wills, for they have great strugglings and checks of Conscience within, even while they commit those Sins. And therefore what can their continuing in sin be so properly attributed to, as to the weakness of the Flesh.

(3.) Relapses into the same sin after Repentance, seems to proceed from the weakness of the Flesh. For he that hath once smarted severely for his Sins, and suffered under the Agonies of Conscience for them; he that hath gone so far, as not merely to lament his Folly, and to abhor his Wickedness, but to make solemn Vows and Promises, and Resolutions never more to return to the Practice of them; it is hard to conceive, that such a one should fall into his Sins again with his whole Mind and Soul, for the Light of Conscience when it is once thoroughly kindled, is not easily put out; it is a secret Fire which burns inward, and can hardly be extinguished; and all those who sin against Conscience, the Dictates of their Minds are right while they commit their Sins; and therefore even these Sins seem to be excused by the weakness of the Flesh.

But on the other side, the Scripture is plain and express, that Sins which do come from the Flesh, do exclude from the Kingdom of Heaven. *The Works of the Flesh are manifest, saith St. Paul, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness, &c. Drunkenness, Revelling and such like, which are properly Sins of the Flesh. Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* And in another place, *For this ye know, that no Whoremonger, nor unclean Person, nor Covetous Man, who is an Idolater hath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God on the Children of Disobedience.* Would God be so severe, under the Dispensation of his Mercy to punish Mankind, with utter exclusion from Heaven, and eternal Misery for Sins, which came merely from the weakness of the Flesh? Then indeed there were just cause to bewail the sad Condition of Humanity, born under one Law, to another bound, created Sick, commanded to be Sound. But God will vindicate his Justice at the great Day, and Mankind shall be fully satisfied, that none shall be damned for the meer weakness of the Flesh, but for the Sins of their Will and Choice; That, as they had evil Inclinations from

from the Flesh, so they had good Inclinations from the Grace of God ; and the Law of their Minds, ought to have governed and kept under the Law of their Members ; that others by the same Assistance which was offered to them, *have crucified the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts thereof* ; That the Grace of God doth enable them to deny ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World ; That, if Men do fall of the Grace of God, it is through their own fault ; that those who relapse into sin after Repentance, and escaping the pollutions of the World, *Their latter end is worse than the beginning* ; and in short, *if Men do live after the Flesh they shall die, but if through the Spirit they do mortifie the Deeds of the Body, they shall live.* All which shews, That there is so great a Possibility of subduing the Inclinations of the Flesh, that if men neglect it, and give way to the fulfilling of them, this very thing will be imputed to them, as a wilfull and damning Sin.

But here the Difficulty still rises ; for Christ supposes that his own Disciples even the most forward, and the best resolved might fall thro' the infirmity of the Flesh, and they did so, upon no great Temptation ; as appears by St. Peter's denying his Master in so dreadful a manner, upon so slight a Provocation as the Damfels saying to him, *Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.* What a mean, low and timorous Spirit had possessed St. Peter at that time ? Was this he, who but a few Hours before said, That though he should die with him, he would not deny him ? Lord, what is Man ? *Verily, in his best Estate he is altogether Vanity.* What ? St. Peter deny his Lord, who made that Confession of him which Christ owned was *not revealed to him by Flesh and Blood, but by his Father in Heaven, viz. That he was the Christ the Son of the living God ?* St. Peter, who when other Disciples went back, said to Christ, *Lord to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal Life. And we believe and are sure, that thou art the Christ the Son of the living God.* St. Peter, who was so forward to defend our Saviour, That he drew his *Sword and cut off Malchus his Ear !* For him in so little a time after to deny his Lord, not only once but twice, nay a third time, and that with Execrations upon himself ! This seems to be a Sin so wilful, so deliberate, so presumptuous, that if this may be excused through the weakness of the Flesh, what may not ? What then shall we say ? Doth God put such a difference between persons ; that those Sins are meer *Infirmities* in his account in some, which would be accounted presumptuous Sins in others ? No certainly, *God is a righteous Judge ; and he is no respecter of Persons, for by him Actions are weighed ;* he judges things as they are here, and will judge Men according to them hereafter.

v. 75. Was it, that he repented presently, and wept bitterly ? This was a very good Symptom, when he came to himself so soon, that the Disease was not deeply rooted in him ; and that it was rather a sudden Passion which overcame him, than a deliberate and wilful Action ; which he shewed most effectually by returning to his Duty, and being more active and exemplary in it. Whereas Judas his Agonies of Conscience, ended in Despair and Self-murder.

But by what certain Rules may we proceed to judge what Sins are *Wilful and Presumptuous*, and what are *Sins of Infirmity*, or such as come from the *weakness of the Flesh.*

We have two ways to judge by,

(I.) From

(1.) From the Nature of Moral Actions.

(2.) From the Scriptures, declaring what Sins are inconsistent with the State of Salvation. For there are two sorts of Infirmities.

(1.) Such as belong to particular Actions.

(2.) Such as belong to our State and Condition.

(1.) As to the Infirmities of particular Actions.

There are three things which do very much alter and discriminate the Nature of Moral Actions.

(1.) The Choice and Consent of the Will.

(2.) The Time and Deliberation about it.

(3.) The manner of Committing it.

(1.) As to the Choice and Consent of the Will. Here we are to observe two Rules.

(1.) Whatever lessens the Freedom of the Will before the Act of Sin doth lessen the Guilt of it. So that, whether it be ignorance or want of consideration, or some sudden and violent Passion, as much as it abates the Freedom of Choice or Consent of the Will, so much it takes away from the greatness of its Guilt. But here we must suppose, that which takes away the Freedom of the Will, not to be in it self a Sin; for then original Corruption would be an excuse for all other Sins which flow from it. And those who have sinned themselves into a necessity of sinning, would be able to sin no longer; and thus the Devils themselves, and the worst of Men would be the least of Sinners. But setting this aside, the Rule holds good, that so far as our Choice and Consent is taken away, so far the Guilt is extenuated. And from hence sudden and violent Passions, Melancholy vapours, and a disturbed Imagination do lessen the guilt of those Sins which are committed through the Power of them; and would not have been committed if the Person had been himself; *i. e.* capable of judging and considering as at other times.

(2.) The Case is much harder, as to what takes off from the Freedom of Consent in the very Act of Sin. It is true there is a not Fullness of Consent, where there is a Reluctancy of Conscience in the Commission of Sin: But here is an antecedent Choice, and that after Convictions of Conscience, and the worst part prevails, only the other is not quite silent, but gives secret Checks, and complains of its hard usage when it cannot overcome. Now in this case a Sinner is awakened, and if he sins it is against clear light and strong Convictions, and so the Act of Sin is the more aggravated; though there may be more hopes, that the Person may repent, because Conscience is awake in him; as there is of one that is sensible of his Disease, rather than of him who doth not apprehend the danger he is in. *Aristotle* declares, That all *Eth. 1. 7. c. 78.* those who are vicious against their Judgments are in a state of Infirmity; such are not wicked out of Choice, as the rest are; nor so good, as to overcome their bad Inclinations; but they are in a state of War with themselves; sometimes Reason and Conscience prevail, and sometimes vicious Inclinations; and in this case, the event of the War must declare which is the most prevailing side. But in the mean time, the case of such Persons is not desperate but very dangerous; and their Sins only shew that Conscience is alive in them but very weak, and gives faint and dying Groans though it be not dead.

(2.) As to time and deliberation about the Act of Sin. If there be a real surprize, *i. e.* that the Person is not aware, or hath not time to consider what he is to do, he that hath a Mind well resolved, may be betrayed

betrayed into what he would never have done, if he had time to deliberate about it. And this was one great Extenuation of St. Peter's Fall; for from the time of Christ's Arraignment he was in a disturbance, and confusion of thoughts; he was surprized to see Christ carried away in such a manner to the High-Priests Hall; thither he follows afar off; but still remembering whose Servants Ear he had lately cut off. While he was in this confusion and disorder, the Damsels Question so startled and affrighted him, that he denied his Master; and the Fear continuing he repeated that Denial, and added Imprecations to it. But the great Aggravation of the Sin of Judas was; that it was not only a deliberate Act and designed Wickedness. And in this respect, David's Adultery had greater Extenuation than his Murder; because many more thoughts went to the Commission of one than of the other; the one being committed of a sudden, the other after great Deliberation, and with much Art and Contrivance. Thus deliberate Acts of Fraud and Injustice, of Perjury and Rebellion, have a greater Aggravation than Sins committed by the force of a sudden and violent Passion. And those Passions which do most hinder Deliberation, do proportionably lessen the wilfulness of the Sin; as sudden Fear, rash Anger and the like. For, Fear betrays the succours which Reason offers; and Anger intercepts them; which storms at the first Assault, and making its impression before Reason takes the Alarm. The Philosopher determines, that it is a worse thing for a Man to be swayed by his Lust than by his Anger; because Anger seems to be governed by Reason, but is only too hasty in its Execution; but Lust hath no regard to the Dictates of Reason: and there is less of Time, and Deliberation, and Contrivance in the one than in the other. But when Anger goes inward instead of breaking forth, when it gets to the Heart, it then degenerates into Malice and Revenge, and then it hath the greatest Aggravations going along with it.

Eccl. 1. 6.  
c. 8.

(3.) As to the manner of Committing. If it be committed Presumptuously, it is so much the more aggravated. And that consists in these things;

(1.) The lowest degree of Presumption is, when a Sin is committed of set purpose; not only with Deliberation but with Contrivance, Design and Resolution. Thus by the Law a Man was said to kill his Neighbour presumptuously, when he lay in wait to do it. Thus the Psalmist opposes presumptuous Sins, to those which are committed through Ignorance or Inadvertency. And where there is a Will bent and set to commit Sin, there must be an inward and secret Contempt of God and his Laws; as Nehemiah expresses the presumptuous sinning of their Forefathers, *They dealt proudly and harden'd their Necks, and hearkened not to the Commandments, and refused to obey.* So that where there is obstinacy and wilful Continuance in Sin, there Men are said to sin presumptuously.

Exod. 21.  
14.

Psal. 19.  
12, 13.

Neh. 9. 16,  
17.

Numb. 15.  
30.

More Newer.  
P. 3. c. 41.

Heb. 10. 26.

If it be done with open Contempt and Defiance to God and his Law. This the Scripture calls *sinning with a high Hand*; and such who do, are said to *reproach the Lord, and to despise the word of the Lord.* This, saith Maimonides, is beyond sinning out of Inclination, or from the Power of evil Habits or Custom; but it is with a malicious Design, to bring the Law of God into Contempt and Dishonour. And this in respect of the Gospel, is the *sinning wilfully*, which the Author to the Hebrews speaks of: whereby they tread under foot the Son of God, and count the Blood

of

of the Covenant an unholy thing, and do despite to the Spirit of Grace: Which implies a malicious Design to reproach the Gospel:

(2.) As to Infirmities, with respect to our present State; the meaning is, what those Failings are, which are consistent with a State of Grace and Salvation now under the Gospel? To resolve this, we have but one certain Rule; that is, whatever Failings are consistent with the Terms of Salvation, are allowed for Infirmities by the Gospel: and so Infirmities are opposed to such Sins, as put those who commit them out of the State of Grace and Salvation. If God were so strict under the Covenant of Grace, as to require perfect and unfinning Obedience, there could be no allowance for Infirmities, because even those are a breach of the Law of God, and a Deviation from a perfect Rule: And if God should be exact to mark all Irregularities; or whatever is done amiss, Psal. 130. who can stand before his Tribunal? The best Men in the World have <sup>3</sup> reason to pray with the Psalmist, *Enter not into Judgment with thy Servant, for in thy sight shall no Man living be justified.* 143. 2. For if God were so severe to make no Abatements for Failings and Imperfections, it were impossible for Mankind to be saved: But what then doth the Gospel mean with all its Promises of Salvation, and the Hopes it gives of Eternal Life? If Christ's own Disciples were in a State of Salvation, there must be an allowance made for Infirmities and Imperfections, which we find them often charged with in the History of our Saviour: What meant their vain and eager Disputes about Superiority and Pre-eminence, and that at the most unseasonable time when they were at Table with him, just before his Suffering. Lord, what a time was this, for Luk. 22. them to contend, who should be accounted the greatest? What meant that passionate Zeal in *James and John, to call for Fire from Heaven to consume the Samaritans,* when they knew it was not a particular disrespect to our Saviour, which made them so rude, but the common Quarrel between the *Samaritans* and the *Jews*? How many Errors and Mistakes were they liable to, even while our Saviour taught them, and those about very weighty Points, as the Nature of his Kingdom, the necessity of his Death and Resurrection? What Fears and Dejections, and Disorders were they all under upon our Saviour's apprehension, though but a little before they had all resolved to die with him, rather than forsake him? Luk. 15. 4.

What was there now under all these Infirmities, which made these Disciples to be in a State of Salvation? Nothing certainly, but their hearty and sincere Love to Christ, which they manifested before by their constant adhering to him; and afterwards by continuing to serve him. So that our Rule in this Case is, That whatever is consistent with the Love of Christ, and with a sincere and constant endeavour to do his Will, will be allowed for *Infirmities* under the Gospel; *i. e.* for such Irregularities which are consistent with a State of Salvation.

To make this Rule more useful, we must consider;

1. What Failings are not consistent with it:
2. What sort of Failings are consistent.

(1.) What Failings are not consistent. And those are of three kinds.

(1.) Such as come from an habitual Carelessness; or a general Neglect of our Duty, with respect to God and another World. When Persons do not regard what Duties they omit, or what Sins they practise, it is impossible they should have any true Love to God, or to

their own Souls: For the first thing which springs from thence is a Care to please God, without which there is no Salvation.

But there are too many in the World, who regard no more than how to live easily and pleasantly in it, a fair Estate and Reputation; and therefore avoid great and scandalous Sins, and the gross Neglect of God's Publick Worship; but never mind inward and secret Sins, such as evil Habits, the violence of Passions, the vanity of their Minds; being carried away with the pleasing Temptations of a deceitful World, without serious considering, or looking into their own Temper and Disposition; which may be very vain and sensual, and therefore unfit for Heaven, tho' they be not remarkable for Profaneness, or any gross Impiety: But the Gospel requires a spiritual Temper, and Disposition of Soul to qualifie persons for Heaven; and where-ever that is, there will be a constant Care to avoid being overcome by the Temptations of an alluring and sinful World.

(2.) The habitual Practice of any known Sins, such I mean as the Scripture saith, *Those who commit them shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* And as to these, St. James his Rule is, *Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point he is guilty of all.*

This seems to be very severe Doctrine now under the Covenant of Mercy; but we are to consider, that by one point he doth not mean any one Act of sin; for he saith afterwards, *That in many things we offend all;* but he means any one sort, or kind of known Sins. It was a common Doctrine among the Jews, that if a person were remarkable for keeping any one Precept of the Law, especially such as respected God and his Worship, that would make amends for all the rest; and this was the true Reason, why the Pharisees *made long Prayers, and yet devoured Widows Houses;* for they thought the Duties of the first Table would excuse the neglect of the other. But St. James saith, if a Man keep all the rest of the Law, and yet allows himself in the wilful breach of any one point, that implies such a contempt of the Lawgiver, as renders him as obnoxious to Divine Justice, as if he had broken the whole. But here, a great difference is to be made between a single Act committed through the Power of Temptation, against a contrary habit of Vertue, and the habitual Practice of known Sins. It is possible for a sober Man to be surprized into an Act of Intemperance, and to be overcome by the strength of Wine; but see the difference between such a one, and one that hath a habit of Intemperance. The one goes on in his Course, and hath lost the very Sense of his Sin, and the Power of resisting it, and by degrees thinks he cannot live without it; the other looks with Indignation upon himself for his Folly; he repents presently, and resolves to avoid all occasions of being guilty of the like folly. And the same holds as to other Sins; if persons do love God and their Souls, and be overcome with Temptations, they presently repent with great sincerity, and return no more to the Practice of it.

(3.) All Acts of known Sins presumptuously committed, are inconsistent with a constant and sincere endeavour to please God. Where there is true friendship among Men, it is not presently broke by every neglect, or sudden Heat and Passion; but if a Man sets himself with Study and Deliberation to affront another, that is a reasonable cause to break off any pretence of Friendship, because such an Action was not consistent with the love of a Friend; so it is with notorious Sins committed wilfully and deliberately, notwithstanding all the motions to the contrary from God's Honour, and Justice and Sovereignty; and from  
the



the Commands and Threatnings of the Gospel; these are inconsistent with being in a state of Friendship with God, which is all one with a state of Salvation. Not, that all who commit them, must immediately or necessarily be damned for them; but though hereby they renounce any Title to Friendship with God, and all their hopes, as long as they continue in such a state without true and hearty Repentance, are vain and groundless. And to entertain such hopes notwithstanding such sins, is properly the Sin of Presumption: which is confidence of another's Favour without any Reason for it:

(2.) By these, we may now easily understand what those Failings are, which the Gospel allows for *Infirmities*; viz. such which are unavoidable by us in this imperfect State, notwithstanding a constant and sincere Endeavour to please God by doing his Will, *God knoweth our frame* Psal. 103: *and remembereth that we are but dust.* Not meer dust, for then, it were 14. to no purpose to take care to save our Souls; but a mixture and composition of dull, heavy, lumpish Matter, and a sprightly, vigorous, active Soul, which grows uneasy by being fettered and clogged, and distracted in its best and freest motions by it. The Soul can hardly raise it self above this Region of Darknes and Temptation, and attempt a flight towards the state of serenity and happiness above, but it is pulled down by that weight which hangs upon it, and diverted by the various and restless Impertinency of wandring Imaginations. The most watchful mind cannot prevent all the disorders of a roving fancy in the midst of our more serious Devotions. If we set our selves to fix our minds upon the best Objects, and to prevent any wandring thoughts, the success seldom answers our Design, and our thoughts are gone before we are aware of it. Our minds are like a Ship tossed upon the rowling Waves; but although we cannot hinder their unequal motion, we may steer their course to the Port we aim at. But besides the Extravagances of Imagination, our desires are hard to be kept within their due Bounds; there are many failings in our best Duties, great Coldness and Lukewarmness at least in our Devotions, and yet too great proneness to think well of our selves for them, though God knows our Omissions and Neglects are so many, and those we do perform are so mean, and slight, that we have more cause to pray to God to forgive, than to hope he will accept our mean Performances. But yet I do not say our best Actions are Sins; for there is a real difference between Actions imperfectly good, and morally evil; in these, the Substance is bad, but in the other, the Acts themselves are good, but only lessened by the manner of doing them. And to these failings in our best Actions, we must add the great unevenness in our Tempers; the inconstancy of our Resolutions; the uneasiness of our Minds, under the troubles of Life arising from want of due Resignation, and Submission to the Will of God; the many secret lurking Passions within us, which are called the motions to sin; and *St. James stiles, The lust which conceives and brings forth Sin*; and *St. Paul, The Law in our Members warring against the Law in our Minds*, which may give a great deal of Disturbance where it cannot prevail. It is a sad thing to read the complaints of such persons, as *St. Gregory Nazianzen*, and *St. Jerom* about the inward motions to sin, after an Age spent in Mortifications; and when their Bodies were withered with Age, and broken with Diseases and hard Usage. But there is a greater instance than these of *St. Paul* himself, who after all his Perils by Land and by Sea, after all his Watchfulness and Fastings, and

1 Cor. 9. 17. Prayers, yet he was forced to keep under his Body, and to bring it in Subjection; lest that by any means, saith he, when I have preached to others, I my self become a cast-away. But still there is a great difference between pursuing the things of the Spirit, with the reluctancy of the Flesh, and pursuing the things of the Flesh, with the reluctancy of the Spirit; the former shews only the motions of the Flesh, which being subdued are but Infirmities; but the latter do not cease to be wilful Sins, though there be inward struggling in the Commission of them; and the prevailing party ought to give the denomination to the person, whether carnal or spiritual. For, *They that are after the Flesh do mind the things of the Flesh, but they that are after the Spirit, do mind the things of the Spirit.* And according to the great design and tenour of our Lives and Actions will be our Character in this World, and recompence in another. Nothing now remains, but to conclud with recommending to you the Duties of *Watchfulness and Prayer.*

Rom. 8. 5.

(1.) *Watchfulness*; which is a constant care of our selves and Actions. We walk as it were upon Precipices, and therefore had need to look to our standing, when we see persons falling on every side. There is no force indeed in our case, because we are in a state of Trial; but we live in the midst of Snares and Temptations, and Sins which do so easily beset us, that we cannot walk one step in our way without danger; and therefore there is continual Reason for *Watchfulness*. But that is not enough: For,

(2.) We must add *Prayer* to our *Watchfulness*. Otherwise, our presumption of our own strength may make us fall, God will have us owe our standing to his Assistance, which he hath promised to give upon our earnest Prayer to him for it. No Duty more proper for us in this state of Temptation; no Duty more effectual for obtaining suitable Supplies for our present Necessities; where a Man falls by Temptation,

Matt. 7. 7.

8. 21, 22.

Mark 11.

24.

Joh. 16. 24.

Jam. 5. 16.

1 Pet. 3. 12.

Joh. 3. 22.

5. 14.

Jam. 1. 12.

St. *Chrysostom* saith, it is because he knew not how to pray. For Prayer, when duely performed, not only diverts, and raises and composes the mind, and so breaks the force of a present Temptation; but when a close Siege is laid, it keeps the Passage open for supplies from Heaven, and brings down those Supports which may enable us so to endure *Temptation*, that when we are tried we may receive the Crown of Life which God promised to them that love him.

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# SERMON XXXIV.

Preached at

## HAMP TON-COURT:

Before the

# King and Queen,

O N

*August the 7<sup>th</sup>. 1689.*

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ACTS xxvi. 8.

*Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you,  
that God should raise the Dead?*

**T**Hese words are part of the Excellent Defence, which St. *Paul* made for himself before King *Agrippa*, and the Roman Governour for embracing the Christian Religion. And if it were so desirable a thing to have heard St. *Paul* Preach, (as one of the Fathers of the Church thought it, when he parallel'd it with seeing Christ in the Flesh) it was especially at that time, when before so great an Audience, and upon so Solemn an occasion, he was to give an account of himself *touching all the things whereof he was accused of the Jews*, Ver. 2. There had been a long and implacable Hatred both in the Rulers and People of the *Jews* against him above any other Apostle, having had greater advantages of Education among them, and being more remarkably zealous for preaching up that Doctrine, which himself had furiously opposed, and that upon a Principle of Conscience, as he saith, Ver. 9. *I verily thought with my self, that I ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth.* And such a Conscientious Persecutor would not do that which he accounted *the work of the Lord negligently*, as he shews, Ver. 10, 11. But that the same Person should on a sudden quit all his Hopes and Expectations among the *Jews*; and not only betake himself to a Sect so much hated and despised, as that of Christianity was; but, to be so active in all places for the promoting it, was a thing which did both surprize and enrage them. Insomuch, that when he came up to *Jerusalem*, a popular Tumult was soon raised <sup>21. 27, 30.</sup> against

against him, which had like to have cost him his Life, if the Roman Officers had not rescued him from their Fury. But after he had made several Defences of himself, to the People, to the Council, to the Roman Governour, and found their Rage and Malice against him to continue still, when *Festus* would have sent him to *Jerusalem* to be tried, He appeals to *Cæsar*; and during this Appeal, when *Agrippa* came to visit *Festus*, hearing of this remarkable Cause, and the vehement Prosecution of it, he had a Desire to hear what *St. Paul* had to plead for himself.

But before I come to the particular matter of his Plea in these words, there are two things observable concerning him.

1. That although he knew he could not suffer in a better Cause, and had a Prospect of his Sufferings before he went to *Jerusalem*, and went thither with a Resolution to undergo any thing for the sake of Christ, yet he quitted no advantages which the Law gave him. For, when the Officer would have scourged him, he pleaded his Freedom as a Roman Citizen; and all such were exempted from Scourging by the *Porcian* and *Sempronian* Laws. And when he found the Design was laid to carry him back to *Jerusalem*, and there to make him a Sacrifice to the Rage of the *Jews*; he makes use of the Privilege of the Roman Laws, and before Sentence made his Appeal to *Cæsar*. So little did he think it inconsistent with the Christian Doctrine, of Suffering to make use of Legal Privileges for his own Defence, against unjust Violence.

2. That in all his Defences he insisted on the *Resurrection* as the main Point. For although the true ground of the violent Hatred and Malice of the *Jews* against him, was his constant and zealous Preaching *Jesus* and the *Resurrection*, as he did at *Athens* and other places; yet those who persecute Men for the sake of Truth, always pretend some other Reason for it; and nothing is more common and plausible than that of breaking the Laws. And the *Jews* now thought they had this Advantage against *St. Paul*; for they charged him with profaning the Temple by carrying a *Gentile* into it; but the Matter of Fact was mistaken; however, this served for a popular Pretence against him, and that was all they sought for, (Malice working most mischief under a Disguise.) And this took presently, and spread so suddenly, That it is said, *All the City was moved, and the People ran together, and they took Paul and drew him out of the Temple.* When *Tertullus* pleaded against him, he faintly urged his going about to profane the Temple; but the main of his Accusation, was, That he was a Ringleader of the Sect of the *Nazarens*; therefore *St. Paul* in his Answer in short, saith to the other things objected, That they could not prove them; but as to the Way which they called *Hereſe*, i. e. owning the Doctrine of Christ, he was so far from denying it, that he professed it before them all. And as he declared his Faith freely, so he did his Hope too. *And have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a Resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.* This was the Point *St. Paul* reduced all to. *Touching the Resurrection of the dead, I am called in question by you this day.* And so here to *Agrippa*, *And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the Promise made of God unto our Fathers; unto which Promise our twelve Tribes instantly serving God day and night hope to come, for which Hopes sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.* And then immediately follow the words of the Text, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?*

Wherein

Wherein we have the Strength of the Apostles Argument, to prove the Truth of this Mystrious Doctrine of the Resurrection; although artificially couched by way of Insinuation and Address.

(1.) It is not a vain thing to suppose it, because God had Promised it. For no Tradition of Fathers, no Conjectures of Philosophers, no Power of Nature could be a sufficient Foundation to build such an Article of Faith upon; nothing short of *the Promise made of God*.

(2.) It is not a new thing started by him, to disturb and perplex the Minds of Men; it was a Promise made to our Fathers, *i. e.* it was involv'd and implied in the great Promise of the Messias, and the Happiness to come by him; which was not with Respect to this World, but the World to come; the full and compleat Enjoyment whereof must suppose a Resurrection of the dead.

(3.) It is not an unreasonable thing; which appears by St. Paul's putting it to them in such a manner, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?*

Wherein the Apostle hath shew'd us the true Method of asserting and defending the Mysteries of the Christian Faith, *viz.* not to undertake to demonstrate things by natural Reason, which are incapable of it; but first to prove them to be of Divine Revelation; and then to shew that there is no Objection from Reason, which can make that Revelation incredible.

And this I shall endeavour to make out, as to the Subject here mentioned; and that

(1.) In General, with respect to the Doctrine of the Resurrection.

(2.) More particularly, (1.) As to the Resurrection of Christ, (2.) As to the Resurrection of the Dead at the great Day.

(1.) In General, as to the Doctrine of the Resurrection.

It is no unreasonable Method of proceeding with Mankind, to suppose some general Principles agreed on, before we undertake to prove particular Doctrines. For when we go about to reason at all, we must suppose the Foundations of certainty; without which it is to no purpose to undertake to convince any Man of any thing. When we prove that there is a God, we must suppose something that is without our selves, in the Frame of this visible World; and from the order of Causes, the variety of Effects, the nature of successive Beings we justly infer, that it could not be always just as it is; and therefore, it will be produced by a Being Superiour to it, whose Power must be Infinite, as giving Being to that which had none, and disposing things in such a manner as we see them. For as nothing can be without a Cause, so it is most unreasonable to suppose, that which once was not, should put it self into Being; or a blind and unactive Cause should produce such admirable Effects.

An infinite Power being then necessarily supposed, as to the Production of the World, it cannot be unreasonable to apply it to a particular Effect, although above the power of natural Causes, if it be such a one as is agreeable to the infinite Wisdom of God. It is an unreasonable thing, to suppose any absurd Doctrine to be true, because God's Power is infinite. For he doth not employ his Power, but in a way most agreeable to his Wisdom; and his Wisdom is discovered in the suitability of the End, and the clearness of Divine Revelation.

It is as possible for God now to raise the Dead, as at the great Day; but we have no reason to believe it, because it doth not now answer the great

great End of the Resurrection, which is in order to an eternal State. Therefore altho' there be an equal Possibility in the thing, yet there is not an equal Credibility; because this doth by no means come up to the declared Purpose of God's raising the Dead; which is of very great moment for Mankind to believe and expect.

If I could believe it possible, for the Body of Christ to be in ten thousand places at the same time, (which I cannot) yet if it were not to attain some great and spiritual End, which cannot be carried on another way, I have the same reason to think it incredible, as I have to believe that God will not employ his infinite Power, as often as a Priest shall think fit, by repeating the words of Consecration. And we never find in the whole History of Scripture the infinite and miraculous Power of God, tied to a certain Form of words; and that to no spiritual End, *viz.* either for the Conviction, Conversion, or Sanctification of Mankind; to which other means more proper and agreeable are appointed.

But in the Case of the Resurrection of the Dead, our Saviour hath sufficiently declared the End and Design of it to be such, that we may justly suppose, that if God will employ his infinite Power, it would be for such a Purpose: *The hour is coming, saith Christ, in which all that are in the Graves shall bear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the Resurrection of Life, and they that have done evil unto the Resurrection of Damnation.*

Joh. 5. 28,  
29.

Can we imagine the Power of God to be employed for a more suitable End, to the Design of his Providence than this? It is not to make them capable of acting over again all that Folly, and Vanity, and Vice, which they live in now; it is not merely to shew his Power over all the scattered Atoms of our Bodies, and that he can when he pleases fetch them out of their secret Repositories, and dispose and unite them so, as to make the same Bodies; it is not to convince then the unbelieving part of Mankind, when they see that effected, which they before thought incredible; for, they who will not believe now, upon the Evidence which God hath given, so as to prepare themselves for that great Day, shall then be forced both *to believe and tremble.*

Altho' then we do own, that without God's infinite Power we look on the Resurrection as impossible, yet this ought to be no disparagement to the Doctrine, since the End of it is such, as doth so fully agree with the Wisdom and Design of Providence.

It's true, the ancient Fathers who discoursed much to the Heathens, upon the Argument of the Resurrection, which they thought one of the most incredible Parts of the Christian Doctrine, do make use of many comparisons and similitudes from natural Causes and Effects. But we are not to look on them as strict Proofs, but as handsome Illustrations, being designed to take off the Scorn and Derision, with which the Heathens entertained the Doctrine.

Thus they speak of a *Diurnal Resurrection, viz.* Of the Day dying into Night, and being buried in Darkness; and in the Morning springing out of its Grave of Obscurity and Silence, with a fresh Glory and Splendour; of an *Annual Resurrection*; when the Trees begin to have a new Life in them; and the precious Liquor which shoots up into the withered Body and Branches, and so brings forth new Leaves and Flowers, and Fruit. But after all, we know, that such a Revolution of Days and Nights, and the several Seasons of the Year, depends upon certain and natural Causes, *viz.* the Diurnal and Annual Course of the

the Sun. All that can be proved hence is, that things may not always remain in the same state of Darknes and Inactivity; but that the same God, who hath appointed the Times and Seasons for other things, may if he please restore Mankind, after a long Night, and cold Winter in the Grave, to a state of Life and Vigour, at the Day of Resurrection.

The Story of the *Phœnix* so often mentioned by the Ancients, holds well enough against the Authors of it (for the Christians had it from the Heathens,) viz. to prove there is no Absurdity in believing the Possibility, that Life may be restored after the Corruption of the Body; and that they had no reason to deride Christianity for a Doctrine, which themselves owned in their famous Tradition of the *Phœnix*.

*Ep. 42. Plin. l. 10. c. 2. Tacit. An. l. 6.*

But when they argued strictly about this matter, they resolved it into the same infinite Power of God, whereby he made the World. And according to the due order of our Creed, we must first believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth, before we are to believe the Resurrection of the Body.

And although the matters of Faith be not capable of strict demonstrations; yet we have this strong evidence to convince Mankind of the credibility of it, viz. If they do believe that God made the World, and the Bodies of Mankind at first, they can have no reason to question his Power to new make them; if they do not, they must believe something far more absurd than the Doctrine of the Resurrection, viz. that this World should make it self, and that all things should fall into that admirable Order they are in, without the Power and Management of an infinitely Wise Creatour. And setting aside the Consideration of infinite Power, such persons ought not to find fault with asserting the possibility of the Resurrection; for why may not the same particles of Matter in a long tract of time hit together again, to make up the same Body, as well, as such are at first supposed to have made up not only the visible World, but the wonderful Fabrick of any single Body of Mankind? Why should it be more incredible, that a dead Body should be raised out of its Grave, than that the Body of a Man should spring out of the Earth at first from a meer Fermentation of Matter? So that the most Atheistical persons have no reason to reject the Doctrine of the Resurrection, as a thing incredible to them.

But yet there are some difficulties, which deserve to be cleared, to remove any Temptations to Infidelity; and those relate,

(1.) To the quantity of the Matter to make up such a number of Bodies.

(2.) To the sorting and distribution of it for the making so many distinct Bodies, as were before.

(1.) As to the quantity of Matter; not as to the main Body of the Earth (out of the dust whereof Man's Body was framed at first) but as to that which makes up the Bodies of Men as now they are. And I think one observation is sufficient to clear the difficulties which relate to this: That what passes away from us by insensible Transpiration, was once as really a part of our Body, as that is most visible and discernible in us now, or will be when our Bodies corrupt in the Grave, and are turned into Dust. I need not run to the *Statick Experiments* to prove the vast quantity of Matter belonging to our Bodies, which passes continually away from us; for there is one thing which sufficiently proves

it, and no body can doubt of; and that is, we find all persons grow and shoot up till they come to such a Stature; and when they are attained to it, all the Art and Contrivance, and Nourishment they can use, cannot make any addition to it. To what a prodigious height would Mankind grow, if every seven years they should shoot up in Proportion to the first Seven? And if those parts which receive Nourishment did not spend themselves, all Men, when they cease growing upwards must have a vast Bulk. For they take in greater Nourishment, than when they shot up so fast. But we find it otherwise in Mankind, and therefore those which were once the real parts of the Body do insensibly go off and spend themselves, and others come in their room. And those which were the substantial parts of the same Body, are scattered up and down in our Atmosphere, being wholly indiscernable by us, but yet they are not annihilated, nor lost to infinite Wisdom; who ranges and disposes those minute Particles of our Bodies in such order, that he can command them together, as he pleases, and so make up the same Body again. But this carries me to the second difficulty.

(2.) As to the sorting and distribution of these dispersed Particles, into so many distinct Bodies again. It is but a mean representation of the possibility of this, which the Chymists boast of, *viz.* that they can reduce some Metalline Bodies to their own shapes, and natural appearances from those wonderful Disguises they can put them into. But from thence we may infer, that the infinitely Wise God knows all the secret passages of Nature, and every small part of a Body, and can trace it through all its Changes and Shapes, and bring it back again to unite, with the other parts of the same Body. The truth is, we are mighty Strangers to the invisible Kingdom of Nature; we make a shift to talk and reason a little about the Frame and Contexture of gross and visible Bodies; but for those innumerable parts which are out of the reach of our Senses, we know they must be, and are somewhere, but in what order and variety we know not. But this we know, that the most minute parts we can discern by the help of Glasses, although they appear rough and deformed to our naked Eyes, as the Moss which grows upon the Earth, yet when it is more narrowly searched into by the help of Glasses, is found to have in it admirable Beauty and Curiosity. And it is very observable that the more we look into the Works of Art, the less we admire them; but the more we search into, what we account the most disorderly and confused parts of Nature, even the least and most contemptible, the more we are surprized with admiration. Which shews the infinite Wisdom of the Maker of all things, who hath all those things in due order, which seem to us impossible to be sorted or numbred. And since God hath declared it to be his design to raise the Bodies of the Dead, we have no reason to question, but that he disposes the several parts of them so, as none shall be either lost or mislaid.

Psal. 139. 16. The Psalmist speaks of a *Book* in God's keeping, *wherein all our Members are written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.* And he hath a *Book* too, wherein all the scattered parts of the Body are enter'd, which he knows exactly, and so can easily bring them together. We all know that if the leaves of a *Book* are scattered up and down thro' many hands, and carried to the most distant places; if the Author of it knows where they are, although they were bound up in other *Books*, yet he can easily find out the several parts of it, and put them together again, so, as to make the same entire *Book* which they



they were before. If therefore, God certainly knows and disposes the several parts of our Bodies (for although they are under many disguises to us, they are under none to him) he can much more easily gather them and joyn them together, as his Wisdom and Power is infinitely greater than ours. But suppose the Parts of one Body be turned into the Substance of another, as in those who eat Man's Flesh, how is it possible there should be distinct Bodies, when the Substance of one goes into the Substance of another?

This hath been thought by some a terrible Objection against the Possibility of the Resurrection; but, according to the Principles I have already laid down, it will admit of a clear and distinct Answer. For,

(1.) The difficulty would appear much greater, if there were any such *Cannibals* in the World, as lived wholly upon Man's Flesh. It cannot be denied, that there are Instances of people so rude and barbarous, as to account it a piece of Gallantry to devour their Enemies, whom they have taken in Battle; and of others, who by extremity of Famine have been driven to it. But such extraordinary Instances have no force against a general Doctrine; unless it be proved to be impossible by them; for, against extraordinary Cases, extraordinary Care may be set to make up the parts of those Bodies. But,

(2.) It is but a very inconsiderable part of one Body, which in such cases goes into the Substance of another. That which may stop a ravenous Appetite, may go but a little way towards increasing the Substance of the Body. How little of what we take into our Stomachs, is united to the solid parts of the Body. The Flesh is dissolved into a spirituous Liquor, which at last turns to a Nourishment; but after many passages and refinings in the several Vessels for that purpose, the grosser part, and far greater quantity going off: So that according to the most received Doctrine of Nutrition, suppose the Body of a Man were eaten by *Cannibals*, a very small part of it, would pass into the Substance of their Bodies.

(3.) Suppose there were more, yet there cannot be so much as is already gone off from the Body of the same Man. If a Man lives to thirty or forty years, his Body hath undergone many new Repairs in that time, and all the old Materials were as true and real parts of the Body, as the new ones, and yet it is the same Body, in the sense of all Mankind. Why should it not be then the same Body at the Day of Resurrection, if some of the parts before consumed, be taken to make it up, as well as those very individual parts which a Man had at the time of his Death. Suppose a corpulent Man to fall into lingering Diseases, or a gradual Consumption of all the parts of his Body, must this Man at the Day of Resurrection, have no more as belonging to his Body, than he had left upon him at the hour of his Death? Would it not be the same Body, if it were made up of the parts he had at the beginning of his Consumption? If it be, then the same reason will hold as to other times of his Life; and so this mighty Objection from the *Cannibals* devouring those parts of the Body, which a Man had at the time of his Death can be of no force to overthrow the Possibility of the Resurrection.

(2.) Having thus endeavoured to clear the Notion of the Resurrection in general; I come to the particular Consideration of it.

(1.) With respect to the Resurrection of Christ; which St. Paul had here a regard to; that being the chief Point contested at that time between the Jews and the Apostles; as the Foundation both of the Faith and Hope of Christians. For, saith St. Paul, *If Christ be not risen, then* <sup>1 Cor. 15.</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Pet. 1. 3. *is our Preaching vain, and your Faith is also vain.* And St. Peter, That  
 Rom. 1. 4. *they are begotten again to a lively Hope through the Resurrection of Jesus*  
 Act. 5. 31. *Christ from the dead.* It was by this, saith St. Paul, That he was decla-  
 red to be the Son of God with Power: It was by this, saith St. Peter, that  
 God exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour to give Repentance to Israel,  
 and remission of sins. And therefore the Apostles after the pouring out  
 of the Holy Ghost upon them, insist chiefly upon this point; and that  
 not in distant places at first, where Circumstances could not be known  
 or examined; but at Jerusalem, while all things were fresh in their Me-  
 mories, and all matters of fact might be strictly examined. Thus St.  
 Peter on the Day of Pentecost, standing up with the eleven said, *Ye Men*  
 Act. 2. 14. *of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, hearken unto my words.* And  
 22. then follows his Charge upon them for the Death of Christ; *Jesus of*  
 23. *Nazareth a Man approved of God, him have ye taken, and by wicked hands*  
 24. *have crucified and slain.* And what then? *Whom God hath raised up.*  
 32. This might seem incredible to them at first hearing; but St. Peter goes  
 on, and having proved it foretold by David he saith again, *This Jesus*  
 hath God raised up: But how doth this appear? *Whereof,* saith he, *we*  
*all are witnesses; i. e.* We that stand here before you, and are ready to  
 undergoe any Trial of our Sincerity in the matter; we do not tell you  
 of Witnesses that live at a great distance, but we whom you see and  
 hear, testify what we have seen and heard. If you are unsatisfied go  
 and search the Monument where his Body was laid; examine the Sol-  
 diers that were to guard it; go to the Council and let them search into  
 the bottom of it; here we stand and are ready to give our utmost Testi-  
 mony to the Truth of it. Not long after, as Peter and John were go-  
 ing into the Temple, and a great number of People were gathered toge-  
 ther upon a Miracle wrought by them, St. Peter again tells them, That  
 they had killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised up from the Dead,  
 3. 15. *whereof we are Witnesses.* This extremely galled the Priests and Sadduces  
 4. 1, 2. present, as appears afterwards, and they seized upon them, and the next  
 5. day a solemn Council was called to examine them. But do they flinch  
 from their Testimony then? No; so far from it, that St. Peter speaks  
 8. more boldly to them; *Ye Rulers of the People, and Elders of Israel: be*  
 10. *it known unto you all, and to all the People of Israel, that by the Name of*  
*Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified whom God raised from the Dead, even by*  
*him doth this Man stand here before you whole.* Could any thing be spo-  
 ken with more Freedom and Plainness than this? The Person whom  
 ye crucified God hath raised from the Dead; and thereby hath demon-  
 strated your Wickedness and Folly; he whom ye slighted and killed,  
 even now he works Miracles among you; for by him doth this Man  
 stand here before you whole. Could any thing be more provoking to  
 them than this? Why was not the matter at first examined. And if  
 there had been any occasion to suspect them, never were men more con-  
 cerned to lay open an Imposture than these were. Why were not o-  
 ther Witnesses produced against them, and the whole Contrivance then  
 laid open to prevent any farther mischief? But like guilty Men they  
 durst not go farther into it; only they endeavoured to stop their mouths,  
 8. and charged them *not to speak at all, or teach in the name of Jesus.*  
 20. But this would not do their business; for they answered, *They could*  
 5. 27. *not but speak the things which they had seen and heard.* After this, we  
 find them brought before the Council again; and then they severely  
 rebuked them for breaking their command, to which the Apostles an-  
 swered

swered with great Temper and Constancy, *We ought to obey God rather than Man*, and immediately tell them the same things, *The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. And we are his Witnesses of these things.* No wonder that it follows, that when they heard it, *they were cut to the heart*; for nothing is so cutting as a true Charge of Guilt; when persons cannot answer it, nothing can be more uneasy than to be told of it. And instead of examining the matter farther, they take *Gamaliel's* Counsel, and let them alone.

28.  
30.  
32.  
33.

This I the rather insist upon, because the matters were then fresh, the persons were alive, who were most concerned to disprove them, and the Apostles urged them before that Council, which had not long before contrived and procured the Death of Christ, and took great care to prevent the taking away of the Body when it was in the Monument.

And now, *Why should it be thought by any a thing incredible that God should raise the Dead?* When there were such early, and such constant Witnesses of it; who offered the proof of it to all sorts, and wrought Miracles to confirm their Credibility. What can the most incredulous Mind suggest towards the taking away the force of their Testimony? There are but two ways to do it.

(1.) To suppose them honest and well-meaning Men, who were deceived by their own Fancies.

(2.) To suppose them, cunning and designing Men, who went about to deceive the World, with what they did not believe themselves.

(1.) To suppose them deceived themselves. All that hath been suggested in this Cavilling and Sceptical Age to this purpose, is that the Scripture it self owns, that some good Men have been deceived in the same manner; as *Abraham* and *Lot* taking the Angels for Men, and believing that they did eat. But I will make it plain, that there was a vast Disparity in the Case. For,

B. S. Ep.  
23. 25.  
Gen. 18. 6.  
19. 3.

(1.) Here was a true and real Body without dispute, for it is not denied that Christ did really suffer on the Cross, and was dead and buried. But what became of the true Body of Christ? In the other Cases, either there was no real Body at all; but the Angels assumed such matter for the time, which had all the appearances of Humane Bodies in speaking, walking, and eating; or if the Bodies were real, yet we read nothing as to any such Circumstances, of dying and being buried, as there are about Christ's Body. And there are some remarkable Circumstances as to the Body of Christ, which ought to be observed.

1. That there was infallible Proof, that he was really dead; by the Testimony St. *John* gives of his seeing the Soldier pierce the *Pericardium* with his Lance; which all agree to be a mortal and incurable Wound, if there had been Life before, and he adds it because there were then some, who denied that he really died on the Cross.

Joh. 19. 34.

2. That his Body was laid in a new Sepulchre, cut out of a Rock; which is taken notice of by three Evangelists; because it was not liable to any suspicion of Practises by his Disciples, as to the conveying away of the Body by any other way, than by the mouth of the Sepulchre.

Matth. 27.  
60.  
Mar. 15.  
46.  
Luk. 23.

3. That the mouth of the Sepulchre was closed up with a Stone; which was Sealed and had a Watch set to Guard it, so that here was all imaginable Care taken to prevent any taking away the Body out of the Sepulchre.

51.  
Matth. 27.  
66.

(2.) The

(2.) The Proofs as to the Truth of Christ's individual Body, after the Resurrection are quite of another Nature from those of the Angels appearing to eat with *Abraham* and *Lot*, for this was a sudden Action of theirs, and not the main thing intended by them: It was only to introduce the Message they had to declare; but in the case of our Saviour, the great business was to assure them of the Truth of his Resurrection. Therefore it is said, *That he shewed himself alive after his Passion by many infallible Proofs, being seen of them forty days.* Among these Proofs St. *John* insists upon his shewing them his Hands and his Side; but this would not satisfy *Thomas*, but he must thrust his Hand into his Side: Could there be greater Proof of the same Body than this? So that either we must give over all Evidences and Proof of the same Body; or we must allow that it was given in the case of Christ's Body. And nothing but obstinate Infidelity can make any objection against the way of Proof, supposing the matter of Fact to be true, as the Evangelists relate it.

A&T. 1. 3.  
Joh. 10. 20.  
27.

(2.) But if that be not allow'd, then they must be charged with a design to deceive and abuse the World, too which I shall only say at present these two things:

1. That endless suspicion is a very unreasonable thing; where there is no Foundation for it; as none can be assigned as to the Apostles, either as to this World or another; since they declare no hopes of recompence hereafter, and no compensation to be expected here.

2. That some Proof of Sincerity must be allow'd; and they offered the fairest; and that is the true reason why Christ appeared to them, and not to his Enemies.

(1.) The Disciples themselves were afraid of being deceived this way; and therefore could not be convinced, till by many *infallible Proofs*, as St. *Luke* calls them, they were satisfied it was the real Body of Christ. If it had been only a sudden and transient Appearance, there might have been some cause to have suspected it; but this was so far from it, *that he conversed among them forty days at several times; he shew'd them his hands and his feet, his flesh and bones, and the very holes in his side which the Spear had made.* And what proof can be given of the truth of a Body greater than this? If they had pretended, that after his Resurrection, his Body was present, but after the manner of a Spirit, *i. e.* after an invisible, impalpable, unintelligible manner, the World would have despised their Testimony, and there had been no need to have said more for rejecting it, than that if Body and Spirit be to be known asunder, it must be by the different properties; and therefore to confound them, is to confound our knowledge of them.

Luk. 24.  
37.  
Act. 1. 3.

Luk. 24.  
39.  
Joh. 20.  
20, 27.

(2.) It was necessary that there should be such Witnesses, who would attest what they saw; which his Enemies and Murderers would not have done, if he had appeared to them. Can we imagine, that the High Priests and Elders, and his other implacable Enemies, who had Blasphemously attributed his other Miracles to the power of the Devil, would immediately have been convinced upon the sight of his Body after the Resurrection? No doubt, by the same Reason they would have concluded it to have been an Apparition of the Devil.

(3.) There must be some Proof of the Honesty and Sincerity of Mankind allow'd; and the Apostles gave the greatest that ever Men did; by their Self-denial, Unanimity, Courage, Patience, Constancy and Perseverance. They almost all laid down their Lives to attest this Truth,  
and

and all underwent great Persecutions for it, when the discovery of the least Fraud would not only have set them at ease, but gained them a plentiful Reward. And therefore, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise his Son from the Dead?*

(2.) We must consider this, with respect to the general Resurrection of the Dead. What reason can we have to think that *incredible*, when God hath already given such an Evidence of the Possibility of the thing by the Resurrection of Christ? He that can raise up one Body, can raise the rest, since the difficulty lies not in the number of Bodies, but in the Nature of the thing. Some have ridiculously question'd whether the Surface of the Earth would be large enough to hold all the Bodies of Mankind upon it at the Day of Resurrection. But an ingenious Person hath demonstrated the folly of such an Imagination.

Sir W. Petty's Essay in Political Arithmetick Postscript.

And it cannot be thought a needless Exercise of Divine Power, when it is in order to the general Judgment, and the Resurrection of Christ was intended as a Pledge and Assurance to the World, not only of that day to come, but that Christ is appointed to be the Judge. *Because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the World in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead.*

Act. 17. 31.

What remains then, but for us to think it our greatest Concernment to live as becomes those, that believe we must not only die, but be raised from the Dead, by the mighty power of God; and that in order to *our appearing before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that we may receive according to things done in the Body, whether good or bad.* What manner of Persons ought we then to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness? What fruit had ye then, saith St. Paul, in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?

2 Cor. 5. 10.  
2 Pet. 3. 11.  
Rom. 6. 21.

As though the bare reflection of a Man's own Conscience were enough to make him sensible of the folly of Sin. But what then is it to consider, That those things which will not bear a severe Reflection at home, shall be laid open before the Judgment-Seat of Christ? We are now apt to palliate and disguise, and conceal our Follies and Weaknesses here, as much as we can from our selves, as well as others; we would fain keep upon good Terms with our selves, and use too many Arts to blind and deceive our own Consciences. But alas! How vain and foolish a thing is it, for us to deceive our selves to our own Destruction? If the Judge at the great Day would judge just as we do, it would be the best Argument in the World for deceiving our selves. But *he will judge the World in Righteousness.* Not according to the vain opinions Men have of themselves, not according to the rash Censures, or indiscreet Flatteries of others, who cannot be able to judge of us, as we may do of our selves. And this is a matter of the greatest Importance to us; since God is pleased to leave it so much to our own Judgment, That *if we judge*

Act. 17. 31.

*our selves, we shall not be judged.* Let us not therefore do it carelessly, partially and ineffectually; but deal faithfully, and sincerely with our selves; searching for our most secret and beloved Sins, and proceed against them in such a manner, as we shall wish we had done when we appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ. Think with your selves then, how shall we then abhor those Sins of the Body, which will expose both Soul and Body to the eternal Vengeance of God? How shall we be ashamed to have yielded so much and so easily to the Inclinations of it, against the Convictions of Reason, the Checks of Conscience,

1 Cor. 11. 31.

ence, and the plain Commands of Scripture? And therefore, the thoughts of that Day should have the most powerful Influence on us, to keep our Bodies in subjection to our Minds, and to subdue the irregular Appetites that come from them. For these Bodies of ours now, are not so much Companions, as Traitors to our Souls; holding a correspondence with their greatest Enemies, suggesting Counsels which tend to their Destruction; and the Temptations which arise from them, are so many and so bewitching, that without a constant care, our Bodies may prove the ruin of our Souls. And those who have the greatest Command over them, have enough to do, to keep under the Passions that arise from them; which may grow troublesome when they cannot govern; and like discontented persons be very uneasie when they are not gratified to their own desire.

It is therefore a great satisfaction to the minds of good Men, to think, there is a Day of Resurrection coming, when their Bodies shall no longer be an Incumbrance, or a Temptation to their Minds; they shall neither hinder their Happiness, nor draw them from it. Thus all the dark Temptations, and cloudy Vapours, and disturbing Passions, which arise from our Bodies now, shall be scattered and dispersed; and there shall be nothing but purity, serenity and clearness in that state. For,

Matt. 13. 43. Then *the righteous shall shine forth like the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father*; when the glorious light within shall break through the passages of the Body, and cause as great a Splendour in it, as the Sun it self would have within so narrow a compass. Thus it is said of our Saviour upon his Transfiguration, That *his Face did shine as the Sun*; and yet his Body then had the same Qualities that ours have now. But after the Resurrection, the glorified Bodies shall be so purified and refined,

Matt. 17. 2. by a Divine Spirit and Power, that they shall become as *Spiritual* as Bodies can be; *i. e.* without corruption and decay; without weariness and pain; without any of those infirmities which make life so uneasie here. Sometimes here the Mind hath such a load upon it, that makes the Body sink under its weight; but there the perfect ease and tranquility of the Mind, will give a new Life and Vigour to the Body. Here the most refined Pleasures of Life, are such which arise from a brisk and uniform motion of the Animal Spirits; but then the Spirit and Joy of another World, will afford such Delights as infinitely exceed our present Imagination. Such Delights which shall be pure and constant, without Interruption, and without End. For in that *glorious presence of God*, there is *fulness of Joy*; and at his right hand are *Pleasures for evermore*.

1 Cor. 15. 42. Psal. 16. 11.

# SERMON XXXV.

Preached at

## WORCESTER.

O N

*August the 17<sup>th</sup>. 1690.*

ECCLES. vii. 16.

*Be not Righteous overmuch, neither make thy self overwise: Why shouldst thou destroy thy self?*

**B**E not Righteous overmuch. Can there be the least danger of that, in such a corrupt and degenerate Age as we live in? And if our Preaching ought to be about the most seasonable Duties, and the most dangerous Sins; one would think this should be one of the last Texts in Scripture we should have occasion to Preach upon. But such an Imagination arises from not understanding the scope and design of these words. For if Righteousness were to be taken here, for that which *Solomon* calls so, *viz. The true fear of God*, it would be hard to reconcile him to himself; and these Expressions with the main design of this Book. For, after all the Representations he hath made of the Good and Evil of this Life, he concludes thus, *Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole matter, fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole Duty of Man.* And he gives a most weighty Reason for it; *for God shall bring every work into Judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* But then, how can any Man fear God and keep his Commandments too much? And the Wise Man saith, *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.* But how can any be over wise in the Knowledge of God, and doing his Will? And the Righteous Man is generally taken by *Solomon*, for a truly good Man; so Ver. 15. *There is a just Man that perisheth in his Righteousness, and there is a wicked Man that prolongeth his Life in his Wickedness;* where the Opposition is plain between a righteous and a wicked Man. How then, can any one be *righteous overmuch*? And, if not, what is the meaning of these words?

Some think that they are spoken in the person of an Epicurean, who despised all Religion, and thought it useful for nothing, but to make Men's Lives uncomfortable to them, and so to shorten their days; and

that the next Verses are an answer to them, by shewing that Wickedness doth much rather do it. There is a Truth, and that very considerable in this Sense, *viz.* that Wickedness doth Men more mischief as to this World, than the most strict and severe Piety; which, altho' it seems uneasy to the Body, yet it is far from being so destructive to it, as Wickedness is, and rather tends to support it, by taking off all such Extravagancies which are so apt to shorten and destroy Mens Lives, by their procuring Peace and Satisfaction. But I cannot see how this comes in, as spoken by another person; and the only reason of it is, the Supposition, that taking them otherwise, they are not capable of a true and proper Sense. But there may be several Accounts given of them, if we take them as spoken by *Solomon*, in his own Name,

(1.) With respect to Providence. (2.) To Religion. (3.) To moral Righteousness and Wisdom.

(1.) They must seem to refer to the method of God's dealing with good and bad Men in this World; of which he spake, Verse 15. Be not too strict and severe in passing Judgment on God's Providence; be not more righteous and wise than God is; do not think you could govern the World better than he doth; pry not too far into those Mysteries, which are too deep for you; why shouldst thou confound thy self? So some interpret the latter words.

(2.) They may refer to Religion; but then they are not to be understood of what is truly and really so; but of what passes in the World for it; and Men may esteem themselves very much for the sake of it. For although Men cannot exceed in the main and fundamental Duties of Religion, in the Belief and Fear, and Love of God; yet they may, and often do mistake in the Nature, and Measures, and Bounds of what they account Duties of Religion.

(3.) They may be taken in a moral sence for that *Righteousness* which Men are to shew towards each other, both in Judgment and Practise; and for that *Wisdom*, which Mankind is capable of, as a moral Vertue; and in both these, there are extremes to be avoided; and so they are not to be *righteous overmuch*; nor to *make themselves overwise*.

There are Three things therefore to be spoken to, for clearing the Sense of these words.

(1.) How we may exceed our Bounds concerning the *Righteousness and Wisdom* of Providence.

(2.) How, with respect to Religion.

(3.) How, with respect to moral Righteousness and Wisdom.

(1.) With respect to Providence: The great Difficulty lies in what 9. 1, 2. the Wise Man saith afterwards, *That the righteous and the wise, and their Works are in the hand of God; no Man knoweth Love or Hatred by all that is before him. All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked, &c.* Now this seems hard to reconcile to the Justice and Wisdom of Providence. But we have sufficient reason to forbear censuring and prying too far into these matters, from these Considerations.

(1.) God is not accountable to us for what he doth. The Psalmist Psal. 36.6. tells us, *God's Judgments are a great deep*; and therefore, it is a vain thing for us to pretend to go to the bottom of them. St. Paul, who had great Advantages above others cries out, *How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out?* We ought rather to admire, Rom. 11. than to search into what he declares *unsearchable*; and to sit down patient



tient under our Ignorance, when he saith, *his ways are past finding out.* The wise and righteous God hath Reasons and Methods of Acting far above our reach; and we do but shew our own Folly, when we pretend to give an account of them.

(2.) We have reason to be satisfied, that his Providence is Righteous and Wise, although we cannot comprehend it. For, as *Abraham* said Gen. 18. 25. in this case, *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* He who is the great and wise God, who loveth Righteousness and hateth Iniquity, cannot act otherwise, but in a way agreeable to infinite Wisdom and Righteousness. If these were not the Perfections of his Nature, he could not be God; and if they be, he can never do any thing repugnant to them. And as long as we own him to be God, we must allow his Wisdom and Righteousness in all he doth.

(3.) He hath declared, That he will give satisfaction to all Mankind, concerning the Secrets of his Providence. But not in this World; and therefore, we ought with patience to wait for *the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* It is then great Boldness and Presumption in us to censure his Proceedings before that day comes. And so I pass to the second Sense. Rom. 2. 5.

(2.) These words may be taken with respect to Religion; and here it is necessary to shew, in what Sense this is to be understood. For, those who have no love to Religion, think a little too much, and are glad to find such Expressions as these to justify their gross Neglect and Contempt of it. But to prevent Mistakes, I shall endeavour these things:

(1.) To shew, that if Religion be rightly understood, there is no fear of Men's doing too much in it.

(2.) That by reason of Men's Mistakes and false Notions about it, they may easily exceed their due Bounds

(1.) That if Religion be rightly understood, there is no danger of exceeding the Bounds of it.

That I may speak more distinctly; we are to consider Religion in general, as comprehending all the Duties we owe to God; which are of a different Nature.

(1.) There are some Duties which are fundamental and necessary in our Minds, without which we can have no Religion; such are the owning God for our Creator, and Governour, and depending upon him for our Happiness.

(2.) Some are External and Occasional; which being positive Duties, are capable of different Obligations, according to the Circumstances of persons. And according to these we may lay down two Rules.

(1.) None can do too much, as to inward and fundamental Duties of Religion.

(2.) None can do too much, as to the external and positive Duties, while they keep to that Obligation, which God hath laid upon them, or they have justly laid on themselves.

(1.) As to internal and fundamental Duties; as owning God and our dependence upon him for our Happiness; as being the Supreme Good, and therefore only capable of making us Happy. And there is so great a Necessity of this in order to our Welfare, that we cannot exceed in it; since we are his Creatures, and are utterly unable to make our selves in the least Happy without him. And if we take this Dependence upon God in all the parts of it, we shall find we cannot go beyond our Duty in it. For, it implies these things,

(1.) A clear and strong Conviction of our Minds, that God alone can make us Happy. And this we can never be too much convinced of; yea all the Arguments in the World are few enough to settle our Minds about it. Which appears by the great pains the wise Man takes in this Book to convince Mankind, that there is nothing but Vanity and Vexation of Spirit to be found here. This he delivers upon his own Experience, after all the Searches, and Pains, and Care, and Contrivances he had used about it. And after that, he gives an account of the several Conditions of Life, and shews that there is no Satisfaction to be had in any of them; and he puts the utmost can be supposed, that a Man enjoy a long and prosperous Life, yet that is so inconsiderable to the future State, that it bears no Proportion, and therefore we ought to look above, and beyond this State, if we would be Happy.

(2.) A due Sense of God upon our Minds; which he calls *remembering our Creator*. For, although there be sufficient Evidence of his Being; yet we are too apt to forget him, there being so many other things to put him out of our Minds; and therefore, at all times we need to be called upon, to remember our Creator; but especially in the time of Youth, when the Vanities, and Pleasures, and Temptations of the World, have the greatest relish with us; and when the things of Religion are most apt to be despised; yet even then we cannot be too much put in mind of our Duty, with respect to God. Because an early sense of God will prevent a deal of Evil; and lay a Foundation for the greatest Peace of our Minds, and the best Conduct of our Peace.

(3.) A constant regard to God, in the course of our Actions. Not merely, that we ought to be concerned for his Honour, on whom we depend; but we must consider, what he hath commanded, and what he hath forbidden, and upon what Terms: For, God ought to prescribe to us the Conditions of our Happiness; and it is a vain thing to expect it in any other way. Therefore we can never be too solicitous about such things, which our Eternal Happiness depends upon. Because a miscarriage herein is the most fatal. We cannot be too much concerned about the Sincerity of our Repentance, and Faith, and Obedience to Christ, because these are the plain and necessary Conditions of our Salvation; and we cannot watch our selves too much, against the Temptations to Sin; which is the greatest Enemy to our Happiness, and yet we are in continual danger of falling into it, and of continuing in it. And when the danger is so great, so near, so constant, we can never exceed in the watchfulness and care of our selves.

(4.) Inward Love and Affection to God; without which there can be no Happiness in him. For that must suppose Union and mutual Satisfaction. But how can we possibly exceed in this, when God deserves so much more than we can give him? And he requires no less from us, *than our whole Heart, and Soul, and Strength?* Which doth not only imply Integrity, but Vigour in our Affection towards him. And to content our selves with a mean degree of Love, is to shew, that we neither know, nor esteem him, as we ought; for the more we have known him, we must love him the more. So that in the great and fundamental Duties of Religion we can never do too much.

(5.) Patient Submission to the Will of God, under all the Accidents of Life. The utmost care we can use, cannot alter the common Methods of Providence; and here all things happen alike to all. Therefore we cannot too much wean our selves from the uncertain Comforts of this Life;

Ecclef. 1.

14.

1. 11.

11. 8.

12. 1.

Deut. 10.  
12.

Life; nor too much resign our selves up to God's disposal. We have always Passions enough within us to keep us in Exercise; and Trials enough without us to put us upon subduing those Passions, which are too apt upon every Cross and Disappointment to fly out, and to grow uneasy. Here is therefore work enough for us to do; and is like to be so, as long as our Bodies and Souls are together in this state. And he that thinks he can do too much in this Work, never yet understood what the Government of his Passions meant.

(6.) A sincere Endeavour to please God, in the Duties of his Worship and Service. For since God hath appointed such Duties, no Man can pretend to depend upon him for his Happiness, who is not sincerely willing to please him, in doing what he hath appointed for his Service; and that in such a manner, as himself hath required. Under the Law, God was very punctual and particular in his *Institutions*; and that as to all the Circumstances of them, and then he expected to be obeyed according to his own Appointments, and added a severe Sanction to his Law; *Cursed is every one, that continueth not in every thing written in the Law to do it.* And he required great Diligence and Care in the keeping all his Commandments; so that then they could not be righteous over much, with respect to the Law of God; for all their care was little enough to perform it. Under the Gospel, God hath taken away the rigorous Dispensation, and instead thereof, he requires a reasonable Service; which doth not only consist in the Acts of our Minds, but in the most reasonable Duties of Religion; in Prayers and Praises, and Sacraments; which ought to be performed by us, with that Diligence and Devotion, as requires our greatest care; and in that, we cannot exceed.

Deut. 27.  
16  
Gal. 3. 10.  
Deut. 6. 17.

(2.) And this leads me to consider the Rules and Measures we are to go by in external and positive Duties.

There are three sorts of Measures to be observed.

(1.) Of strict Obligation; and that depends upon a clear and express Declaration of God's Will; that it is a Duty incumbent on us to perform; as Creatures, or as Christians; as Prayer for one, and celebrating and receiving the Lord's Supper for the other.

As to these, such Rules of Conscience are to be observed.

(1.) They must be done so, as to be consistent with other Duties of Piety, Charity, Justice, Regard to Health, Families and Publick Good.

(2.) They must be done so, as to shew our Fear, and our Love of God in the doing them; *i. e.* So, as not to live in an habitual Neglect of them; nor to perform them so, as if we had no regard to him that appointed them.

(3.) There are other Measures of Zeal and Devotion; which exceed the strict Obligation of Conscience.

I do not now speak of an accidental Obligation of Conscience by particular Engagements of Oaths, or Promises, or Vows; but of what is Free and Chosen. As to which these Rules may be observed.

(1.) The more persons are freed from Incumbrances of the World, the more time they are to set apart for the Worship and Service of God.

(2.) The more Love any have to God and Religion, the more frequent they will be in the voluntary Service of God, and the greater Delight they will take in it. And thus much may serve to clear the Measures of true Religion.

(2.) But

(2.) But there are many mistakes, and false notions of Religion in the World; and by reason of these, Men are very prone to exceed their due Bounds.

And here I shall set down some of the most common and popular, which are most apt to deceive.

Colof. 2.  
23.

(1.) That God is pleased with such kind of Service, as doth most please our own Fancies. This is the Foundation of what the Scripture calls *Will-Worship*; i. e. when Men are not contented with what God hath appointed; but set up their own Fancies, and imagine that God will be as much pleased with them, as with any thing himself hath required. Such as the Worshipping of Angels, and abstaining from Meats there mentioned. If these had been any necessary parts of Religion, no doubt Christ and his Apostles would have recommended them to the Christian Church; but they are far from it; and St. *Paul* very much dislikes the introducing such things, although they had some plausible pretences for them; which he calls a *shew of Wisdom*. But it came at last to this, that such a severity in Diet, such Humility in making use of the Mediation of Angels, seemed very agreeable to the Fancies of Men, and the distance between God and us. And from hence they came to the Invocation of Saints, as appears from them; for their Fancies still ran upon the manner of Earthly Courts, and thought things were managed in Heaven accordingly. From hence came all the gross Superstitions, the frequent Addresses, the tedious Pilgrimages in the Church of *Rome* only to procure the Favours of some particular Saints, to intercede with Christ, that he might intercede with God for them. Whereas the Scripture shews us the plain and direct way of making our Applications to the Father, by the Mediation and Intercession of his Son, whom he hath appointed the Mediator between him and us.

So again, in the Worship of Images, as directly forbidden as Adultery and Murder are in the Ten Commandments; yet because Men shew respect to one another, in keeping and kissing their Pictures, therefore God cannot be displeas'd with worshipping Images, though against his Commandments, because they intend it for his Honour.

Eccles. 5. 2.

Thus among others, because the heats of Fancy, and variety of Expressions, is pleasing to themselves in Prayer, they conclude it is so to God too. Whereas the Wise Man takes notice of the multiplying words in Prayer, as one of the Vanities of Mankind. *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in Heaven, and thou upon Earth; therefore let thy words be few.*

Some place too much of their Religion in a Zeal for or against some external Ceremonies of Worship, and both think what they do is very pleasing to God. Whereas at the bottom, there may be nothing but Temper and Prejudice, and Education in both forts. Some have a natural Averseness, confirmed by their manner of breeding, to all kind of Ceremonies; and others as great an Inclination to them. But still God must be pleas'd with what they are. As the warlike People of old worshipp'd their Gods in Armour; and the rest according to the peculiar Dresses and Habits of their Country.

(2.) That God is pleas'd with what doth most cross and displease our Inclinations. This is another Fountain of Superstition, and seems contrary to the former; only they think God is more averse to our Inclinations,

inclinations, than to our Fancies. It is true, our Inclinations are too much bent to what is morally Evil; and that God abhors. But that is not the thing I am speaking of; but of such Inclinations which have no real Evil in them; but are meerly natural, as to a freedom from pain and uneasiness. And the point is whether God be pleased with seeing us, to vex and torment our selves; and whether that be any acceptable Service to God? As to deny our selves natural rest, to avoid eating a thing because our Appetite is pleased with it, to kneel upon bare Stones, to cut our Flesh, to whip our Bodies, &c. for they are all of the same kind. Can we think that God is pleased meerly with the torment we put our selves to? What conceptions must we have of God then? I do not deny, but reason teaches us to moderate our Appetites, and not to indulge our sensual Inclinations to rest and ease too much, because of ill consequences. But there is a great deal of difference, between a moral Government of our selves, and making those things a part of Religion, and imagining that God is pleased with our meer doing them. Which was the Principle, which carried the Idolaters of old to sacrifice their Children to *Moloch*, because God would be best pleased with that, which was the most against their natural Inclination to do.

(3.) That God is more pleased with Duties of Worship than with moral Duties. From hence they think to make amends for the Miscarriages of their Lives by diligence in Religious Duties. This was the Foundation of Pharisaism, *i. e.* of Hypocrisie, among the Jews. Their Principle was, that God valued nothing so much as his own immediate Service; and therefore they took great care about that, and what related to it; but for Justice and Mercy and Charity they seemed to have very little regard to them; and thought God was so pleased with their Zeal for his Service, that he would easily pass by other Faults. And no doubt, one of their great Quarrels against our Saviour, was delivering the contrary Doctrine, that God prefer'd Mercy before Sacrifice; and that men ought to be reconciled to their Brother, before they offer'd their Gift at the Altar. But still Men are prone to go on in the same way, and to hope that some more than ordinary Devotion will make amends for their Sins; and then it is no wonder to see such over devout at some times, who are very loose and careless at others.

(4.) That God takes more notice of the Duties we perform, than of our manner of doing them. As though he rather number'd than weigh'd them. And no wonder, if such be more frequent and diligent than others in them; they think they can never exceed therein, though they neglect some necessary Duties, as to themselves or Families the mean time. The Service of God ought not to be neglected; for that argues a contempt of Religion; but neither ought we to neglect the Duties of our Calling, for that argues a mis-understanding Religion; as though we did not serve God when we did our Duties therein. It is no hard matter to allot the several proportions of time to both, if Men consider their several Obligations. For, as the pretence of worldly Business ought not to excuse Men in their neglect of God's Worship; so neither ought the pretence of God's Service, to justify Men in the neglect of their Callings. God did not require of the *Jews* to be constant in his Temple from all parts; for then they could never have subsisted; but at the solemn Feasts he strictly required it, and every Week, where-ever they were, they were to keep holy the Sabbath-Day. Persons that were more at leisure, and had greater Conveniences spent more time in their  
Devotion

Luk. 2-37. Devotion than others. Thus *Anna* departed not from the Temple, but served God therein night and day. But this was not a matter of strict obligation to others, although it shewed an excellent Temper of Mind in her. But in case of such frequent returns of Devotion, there must be great care lest that abate the Fervency, and what was first taken up for Devotion come to be a meer Custom, and we flatter our selves that God will accept the bare Duties without the Life and Spirit of them.

(3.) These words may be taken in a *Moral Sense* for that *Righteousness*, which respects other Men; and that is twofold. (1.) Of Judgment. (2.) Of Practice.

(1.) Of *Judgment*, concerning the *Actions* and *Designs* of others; *i. e.* be not too ready to censure, and condemn them; *why shouldst thou destroy thy self. i. e.* Why shouldst thou bring the same Severity upon thy self, which thou usest towards others, according to that of our Saviour, *Judge not that ye be not judged, &c.*

Matth. 7.  
1, 2.

Two things to be spoken to, for clearing this point;

(1.) How Men are *too Righteous* in this Matter.

(2.) What *Mischief* this brings upon them.

(1.) How men are *Righteous overmuch* in this Matter.

(1.) Not in passing a true Judgment upon the Actions of others. For to do otherwise proceeds from want of Judgment and Righteousness. Of Judgment, if we do not see the difference of Good and Evil: Of Righteousness, if we will not. As far as we are concerned, we are not to suffer our Passions to blind our Judgments; not to think that to be a Vertue in one, which we should account a Vice in another; nor to call that an Infirmity in one, which we should judge to be Wilfulness, and Presumption in another.

(2.) Not in keeping our selves from being deceived by the false Pretences of others. It is possible for Men to make use of this very saying, to abuse the credulity of well meaning persons; and to account the discerning of Spirits, as far as it lies within our reach, to be assuming too great a Power of Judging. But our Saviour thought it not inconsistent with his Precept of not Judging, to expose the Hypocrisie of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*; but then, he certainly knew it to be Hypocrisie in them. And as far as we are certain by the Rules which he hath given us we may do the same thing.

But wherein then lies being *Righteous overmuch*?

(1.) In not making allowance for the common Infirmities of Mankind; which do not only consist in the Imperfections of good Actions, but in such Failings, which human Nature is subject to in this state; notwithstanding our greatest care to avoid them. If Persons will be severe upon others, for such things as these are, and condemn all Religion as meer shew and Hypocrisie in them on that account; this is being *Righteous overmuch*. For they do not make the same allowance which God doth; and without which it were a vain thing to hope for Salvation. For, if God should be so exact to mark what is done amiss by us, who can stand before him? And if we expect such an allowance to be made to our selves, what reason have we not to make it to others? At least so far, as not to condemn them for want of sincerity in the main, because of some such Infirmities. How can we righteously judge them, whom God will not judge? We must in judging others make allowance for the Weakness of Judgment and Strength of Passions,

on, which we find often accompanied with a real Tenderness of Conscience. I confess it is very hard to believe, where we see a great appearance of Spiritual Pride, a neglect of moral Duties, Censoriousness towards others, Impatience of Contradiction, &c. that there is a real tenderness of Conscience joined with them. But yet some have stronger Convictions of some Duties than they have of others, and if they did act against their Consciences in those matters, they should resist that which they account the clearest light they have; and in so doing they must cast off the immediate guidance of their Consciences, which might have very bad Effects, as to the force and power of Conscience in other things. I am afraid many do not impartially weigh and consider things as they ought; but when, or where did the generality of Mankind do so? he thinks such Scruples are weak, and ought to be laid aside; but they say they cannot overcome them; and they have prayed; and searched, and used the best means and cannot be satisfied; and what can they now do?

Conscience is really a nice and tender thing, and ought not to be handled roughly and severely; considering how unaccountable sometimes to others, the real Scruples of some Consciences are. Although Conscience be a Man's Judgment in order to Practice, yet there may be a great strictness of Conscience, where there is no strictness of Judgment; and Conscience in some cases is more nice for want of Judgment. But what then? must we condemn all those who labour under that Distemper? And that you count want of Judgment in him, he may look on as want of Sincerity in you.

We have been so long censuring and condemning each other for such things, that God seems by his wise Providence, to bring the Plea of Scruples of Conscience round, that we may learn more tenderness to each other. By which we see that some may really scruple that which others wonder at, and that Mens Consciences are not to be measur'd by the same Light; for that is a matter of Admiration to one, which is of Scruple to another.

The best use we can make of this, is, to pity the Infirmities of Mankind, and of those most, who are under the Conduct of a mis-guided Conscience, because whatever the Action be their Design and Intention is honest and good.

(2.) In putting the worst Construction upon Men's Actions, which is directly contrary to that Charity St. Paul so much commends; for that not only bears the worst, and hopes for the best, but where a thing is capable of being made better by a favourable sense, it is ready to give it. Now, there are many things Men do, which are accounted good or evil, according to the Intention of the doer of them. I do not say, That alters the Nature of the Action in it self; for what God commands is good, and what he forbids is evil, whatever Mens Intentions be; but although a good Intention cannot make a bad Action good; yet a bad Intention may make a good Action evil; not in it self, but to him that doth it. 1 Cor. 13: 4, 5, &c.

And so there are two ways Men may exceed in judging.

(1.) In making no Abatement in an an evil Action as to the person, for the goodness of his Intention. For, although the Action be not good by it, yet it is so much less evil; and in doubtful cases it takes much from the guilt, although not where the Command is plain; as in the Case of *Saul*.

(2.) In charging Persons with a bad Intention in a good Action, where there is no plain Evidence ; for then, it is but Suspicion, and an uncharitable Judgment. Our Saviour might justly charge the *Pharisees* with this, as to their Alms and Prayers, because he knew their Hearts. They laid them open enough to others, by their Affectation ; and where that is gross and notorious, it were weakness, and not charity to judge otherwise. But where we have no ground for it, to judge Men to act upon bad Principles, is being *Righteous overmuch*, or rather being *unrighteous and uncharitable*.

(3.) In judging Mens Condition towards God, from some particular Actions, although contrary to the general Course of them. Think with your selves, what strange and mistaken Judgments you should have past upon *David* and *Abab* ; if you had been privy to the Adultery and Murder of the one, and had seen the Humiliation of the other. If you had seen *Abab* in his Mortification, when he fasted and put on Sackcloth and humbled himself, you would have thought him a Saint ; for he seemed to have been in good earnest for the time. And if you had judged of *David* by those particular Actions, you must have concluded him a very bad Man ; but both these Conclusions had been false ; because taken up upon too slight and narrow an Inspection. The same Case had been as to *St. Peter's* denial, and the Repentance of *Judas*. We must not form our Judgments of others, by single and sudden Actions, which persons may fall into by Surprize, or sudden Accidents, and conclude all the rest to be like ; but we are to suspend our thoughts for the present, and to weigh and compare the course of a Man's Actions together. For, so God will judge Mankind ; and so ought we to judge of one another.

(4.) In judging of Mens spiritual estate from outward Afflictions which befall them. Thus *Job's* Friends were righteous overmuch, when they charged him so deep with Hypocrisie, because his Calamities were extraordinary. It is natural for such, who believe Providence to interpret God's Actions towards Men, are either as Marks of his Approbation or Displeasure. But God hath no where declared so much, and we have no reason to pass such a Judgment on Men ; since the Wise Man saith, *No Man can know Love or Hatred, by the things which are before him.* And there is a just Man who perisheth in his Righteousness, and a wicked Man, that longeth his Life in his Wickedness. If such had seen a just Man suffering to such a Degree, they must have infer'd, that he was Guilty of some secret Wickedness, which made God deal so hardly with him ; but the Wise Man saith, this was to be *Righteous overmuch* ; for God is not to Act according to our Measures. He knows what is best, and fittest for Men to undergo ; and he never Acts so, as they shall have cause to complain at last. *There is a just Man to whom it happeneth, according to the work of the Wicked ; and there is a wicked Man, unto whom it happeneth, according to the work of the Righteous.* Therefore it is very unrighteous for us to pronounce any wicked, merely because they undergo greater Sufferings, and more pinching Calamities than others. There is no judging a Child to be out of his Father's Love, because he corrects him for his Faults ; as long as there is hopes of Amendment he will do it ; and when there is none, he lets him alone to take his course, but he is then more displeas'd than ever.

(5.) In judging too easily concerning the Faults and Miscarriages of others. Men shew their severity to others, and partiality to themselves  
this



this way; they think themselves hardly dealt with, to be censur'd upon vain and idle Reports; and yet they are too apt to do the same thing by others. There is a Justice we ought to shew to the Reputation of others; which lies here in doing as we think reasonable, as others should do by us. Some cannot think so well of themselves, unless they think amiss of others; and such are very prying into the Faults of other Men, and are pleas'd with hearing them; because hereby they bring them on the same Level with themselves. What a Satisfaction doth it seem to profane Men, to find out the Miscarriages of such, who pretend to Religion? But are they the better, or Religion the worse for them? To be a Scandal to Religion, is a great Aggravation of a Fault; but still Religion is not to blame; for it was the want of it, which made them commit those Faults; but where there is a desire to hear the Miscarriages of other Men, and a Pleasure in relating them; no doubt there is an ill Temper of Mind, from whence this proceeds.

(6.) In not using the same Measures, in judging the good and the evil of other Men. The one they presently and easily believe; but the other they make many Difficulties about. If any evil Action be reported of a Neighbour, that is presently entertained and spread abroad to his mighty disadvantage; although it be at first taken up from a malicious, or ill grounded Report. But if a good Action be told, they find out all possible ways, either to lessen the Credit of the Reporter, or the Nature of the Action, or to find out Circumstances to extenuate it. So much Malice and Ill-will doth appear, in the ordinary Considerations of Mankind, and the Judgments they pass upon one another.

(7.) In pronouncing concerning Mens final State in another World. Which is wholly out of our reach and capacity. For that depends upon such things, which it is impossible for us to know; as,

(1.) The Nature and Aggravation of Mens Sins; which depend upon Circumstances we cannot know, but God doth. What measure of Knowledge they had; what Temptations they were under; what means of Resistance; what degrees of Wilfulness and Presumption there were in them.

(2.) The Sincerity of their Repentance for those Sins. We know, it may be, the Sins they have committed; but we cannot know, how much they have smarted for those Sins in secret; what agonies of Mind they have undergone for them; how earnestly they have pray'd for Forgiveness, and Strength against them; what an inward Abhorrence and Detestation they have of them; what a real Change hath been made in their Souls, as to what they have loved and delighted in.

(3.) What Failings are consistent with a general Sincerity. We know a perfect Obedience is impossible; therefore we must allow some, or else we must send all to Hell. But then, how to fix the nature and number of such Failings, so, as to say, So far he may fail, and yet be sincere is impossible for us to do; since we must take in those Circumstances, which it is impossible for us to know.

(4.) What things are absolutely necessary to Salvation, of particular persons. Bold and presumptuous Men are very positive and daring in such Cases; but such as are modest and humble dare not go farther than God hath declared. Some unreasonably restrain the Possibility of Salvation, to the Bounds of their own Communion; but I should sooner question the Possibility of their Salvation, who thus censure and condemn the rest of Mankind. Which is not consistent with that Charity,

which the Scripture makes more necessary to Salvation, than any one Communion.

(5.) The Bounds of God's Mercy. The usual Terms of it are expressed in Scripture: But even that hath acquainted us, that God hath not tied up himself from some extraordinary Instances of it. As in the case of the Thief on the Cross. This is no ground for Encouragement to any to put off their Repentance, but it is a sufficient ground to keep us from censuring any, as to their final Condition in another World.

(2.) The Mischief they bring upon themselves, by being thus severe towards others.

(1.) This provokes the Malice of others against them, who are sure to be revenged, if possible, on such who are so ready to condemn others; and to lay open their Faults, thereby to expose their Weakness or Hypocrisie. Whereas Candour and Fairness makes Men willing to use the same towards those who use it to others.

(2.) It provokes God to be severe to such, as shew no Mercy towards others. And so our Saviour understands it: *Matth. 7. 1, 2.* Nothing we have so much cause to dread, as the Severity of God's Judgment upon us; and nothing should make us more willing to shew Kindness and Good-will to others, than to consider that God will have a regard to it in his dealing with us. Especially, if it appear in our Actions, as well as our Words. Which is the next thing to be considered.

(2.) We may be *Righteous overmuch* in the moral Practice of Righteousness towards others.

(1.) That Men may exceed herein.

(2.) That this proves mischievous to themselves.

(1.) That Men may exceed in Righteousness in their dealings with other Men.

In the Matter of right and wrong, between Party and Party, Men may be *Righteous overmuch*, viz. When Men take all the advantages which the Law gives them against others, without consideration of their Condition and Circumstances. It hath been long since observed, That *Summum jus summa injuria*; the Reason whereof is, That the Law being made for a whole Community cannot be so framed, but it may pinch hard upon some particular persons if it be severely pursued; whose Circumstances are such, as the Law never intended. *The Foundations of Justice*, saith Cicero, are that no innocent Person suffer, and that the common Good be maintained. Where the Circumstances of Persons deserve Pity; it is not Justice, but Inhumanity to pursue their own Right to the ruin of others. No certain Rules can be set down, because Circumstances vary so much; but it doth not become a good Man, to insist upon a bare Right to the utter ruin of another; if they are such as deserve Commiseration, i. e. Poor, helpless and willing to do what they are able for Satisfaction. Aristotle saith, That a Good Man doth not pursue the *ἀκριβοσ δίκαιον*, the exactness of Law; but abates of his Right, although he is sure he hath the Law of his side.

Is it then unbecoming a good Man to pursue his Right? No. But he ought so to manage it, as to shew he hath a regard to Equity as well as Justice.

But there are several ways of Mens being *Righteous overmuch*.

(1.) When they mind Justice without Mercy. The truth is, such persons are not so much as moral Heathens; so far are they from being

ing good Christians. Which so earnestly recommends Charity and Kindness to our greatest Enemies. So that even our Justice ought to have a mixture of Mercy in it.

(2.) When they make the Law the Instrument of their Revenge; when they are glad they have taken their Enemies at such an advantage. We may here apply St. Paul's words, *We know the Law is good, if a Man use it lawfully.* Tim. 1. 8. But there may be a very unlawful use of it, when it is made to serve Mens Passions against each other.

(3.) When they seek for no Accommodation of their Differences in a fair and amicable manner. The Necessities of some Cases are such, That they are fit to be referr'd to such wise Arbitration as the Law provides; but if Men are restless and litigious, who love Differences, and delight in vexing their Neighbours with Law-Suits, it is certain they have not the Spirit and Temper of Christians, who are to live peaceably with all Men.

(2.) How this proves so mischievous to Men.

(1.) It makes such Mens lives very unquiet and troublesome to themselves and others. For it is impossible for some to disturb others, but they must expect a Retaliation. Many Men would have their Passions lie more quiet, if they were not rouzed up and awakened by others; but when they are, they know not how to lay them asleep again. And so they exasperate and provoke each other, and take away all the Peace and Contentment of one anothers Lives. And what Care and Solitude, what Vexation and Trouble doth attend those who are thus *Righteous overmuch*, that they will always be endeavouring to right themselves, till they bring the greatest mischief upon themselves?

(2.) It provokes God to shorten their days out of Pity, to the rest of the World. For the greatest Blessings of this World, are promised to the meek, and patient, and charitable, and merciful persons; and therefore, others have no reason to expect any other, but a Curse upon them.

To conclude all by way of Advice, as to the general fence of these Words;

(1.) Not to think every thing too much, in Religion and Vertue, because some are here said to be *Righteous overmuch*. The far greatest part of Mankind err the other way. They care not how little of Religion they have; and they desire no more than just to carry them to Heaven. Which shews, they neither know, what Heaven or Religion means; for then they would be convinced, their Minds could never be too much prepared for it.

(2.) To understand the difference between true Wisdom and Righteousness, and that which is not. For, upon that depends the just Measure of them both. We cannot be too Wise in that which is real Wisdom, but we may be too easily conceited of our Wisdom, and cry up that for Righteousness which is not, but a sort of busie Impertinency about little matters in Religion, and making a great noise about them, which signifie very little as to true Wisdom.

(3.) Be not too curious in searching, nor too hard in censuring the Faults of others. It is a very unpleasant Curiosity to find out the Faults of others; like that of some Creatures, which delight in Dunghils; and those who consider the Frailties of human Nature, will not be too severe upon the Miscarriages of others.

(4.) Live as easily with others as you can, for that tends much to the sweetning and prolonging Life. It is not possible to live without Injuries; take as little notice of them as may be; and that may be the smartest Revenge: If you are forced to right your selves, do it with that Gentleness and Fairness, that they may see you delight not in it.

(5.) Avoid a needless Scrupulosity of Conscience, as a thing which keeps our Minds always uneasy. A Scrupulous Man is always in the dark, and therefore full of Fears and Melancholy apprehensions; he that gives way to Scruples, is the greatest Enemy to his own Peace. But then let not the fear of Scrupulosity make you afraid of keeping a good Conscience; for that is the wisest, and best, and safest Companion in the World.

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S E R-

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SERMON XXXVI.  
 O F  
 PEACE  
 A N D  
 HOLINESS.

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HEBREWS XII. 14.

*Follow Peace with all men, and Holiness, without  
 which no man shall see the Lord.*

**I**N the Words are Three Things considerable :

- I. A Happiness supposed ; which is here described by *Seeing the Lord.*
- II. Conditions implied in order to it, which are, *Peace with all men, and Holiness.*
- III. The Necessity of pursuing these, as the proper means for attaining it ; *Follow Peace with all men, and Holiness, &c.*

I. A Happiness suppos'd, describ'd by *Seeing the Lord.* There is a twofold seeing the Lord mention'd in this Epistle :

1. A Seeing him by Faith in this World. So in the foregoing Chap-<sup>Heb. 11</sup>ter it is said of *Moses, For he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.* <sup>27.</sup> How can any one see him that is Invisible? For every Faculty must suppose its Object porportionable to it. Therefore he that is *Invisible* cannot be seen by any Faculty which goes no farther than the Objects of Sense. But when he is said to be seen, it must be by applying the Act of an inferiour Faculty to another above it. There is something in our Minds, which answers to the Faculty of Seeing, with respect to intellectual Objects: for, as the Eye takes in the Impression of external and sensible Objects; so doth the Understanding, in its perception of things spiritual and invisible, take in the impression of them in such a manner as they may be said to be seen by it. And our narrowness of Words, or rather our taking our Notion of things from our Senses, makes

makes us to apply such Words as relate properly to them, to the Exercise of our Minds. In strictness of Speech we cannot be said to *See God* at all, for *he is invisible*; and elsewhere the Apostle saith of him, *that he dwells in that light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see*: And yet here he saith, that *Moses* did see him. But how? He saw him with his Mind; his Understanding was as fully satisfied about him, as if he had seen him with his Eyes. And this seeing is by Faith; which he saith *is the Evidence of things not seen*, i. e. which supplies the same Office to the Mind which Sight doth to the Body, by making things to be present to it. And so the *Seeing by Faith* is not bare believing, but it is the making the Object present to our Minds by believing it. As *Moses*, having his Mind fixed upon him who is invisible, acted more from the Consideration of him whom he could not see, than of him whom he saw to be highly displeas'd with him: *Not fearing the wrath of the King; for he saw him who is invisible*. And then our Faith comes to a Seeing of God here, when we act by invisible Motives; which is called *Living by Faith*; and those Motives prevail over the present Objects of Sense, carrying us to the view of an invisible World, and governing our Actions here with a Regard to it.

2. A Seeing him by Fruition in another World. This is a higher Sense of *Seeing the Lord*; and it implies these things:

1. A clearer apprehension of him in our Minds: For, although by Faith we make him who is invisible present to our Minds, yet still there are many Clouds between him and us, so that we cannot see him so clearly and distinctly as we desire to do. The notion of God upon our Minds ought to be as suitable to his Greatness and Majesty as we can make it; otherwise it is unworthy of him. But when we have done all that we can by removing Imperfections, and attributing all possible Perfections to him; yet our Idea of God falls infinitely short of him. For if we could comprehend him, he would not be incomprehensible, and consequently not be God. It's true this Argument will hold as to another World, as far as relates to the difference between God and his Creatures, which must always continue; but there are Degrees of Apprehensions as to God himself: which the Apostle elsewhere speaks of; *For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known*. Which shews, that our Knowledge of God shall be more immediate, and clear, and compleat, than now it is. What we do know of God now, is what he hath been pleas'd to discover of himself in his Works and in his Word; where we may see enough to admire and adore him: but we cannot here reach to so much of the Divine Nature as our Understandings are capable of. For here our Minds see but as through a Glass; i. e. by imperfect Representations, which generally arise from the impressions which sensible Objects make on our Imaginations: But when they come to see Intellectual Beings, by meer Intellectual Light, our Notions will be clearer and purer; especially when God himself shall communicate such Knowledge as is necessary to make the Soul happy: which every degree of Knowledge of the most excellent Object is not capable of doing. For when the Object is so desirable, and our Knowledge of it weak and imperfect, it creates greater trouble and dissatisfaction to us, that we know so much, and yet know so little. We know there is a God infinitely Wise and Good; but we know withal, that he

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is infinitely above us, and *dwells in a Light inaccessible* by us now. This makes it very desirable for us to be in that state where we may know him better; but our narrow scantling we have of it here makes us more sensible of our Ignorance, than in love with our Knowledge. The best Knowledge we have of God in this World is not by Contemplation; but that which works on our Affections and raises our Devotions. We know him best, when we love him, and do his Will. This is the main Business of our humane Faculties with respect to God here. *And unto man he said, behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding.* Our greatest Attainment here lies not in knowing, but in fearing God: we may and ought to know so much of him as to stand in awe of him, in regard of his Majesty, and Power and Sovereignty over us, and the Account we must one day give to him of all our Actions; but this is not the state wherein we can ever hope to be happy by immediate Contemplation of his divine Perfections. It was well observed by *Aristotle* as well as others, That the proper Happiness of Mankind must lie in the best Exercise of our best Faculty in the best state. Our best Faculty is our Mind; the best Exercise of it is Contemplation of the best Object; and the best state of it is where it is most pure, and vigorous and constant: and in such a state, he truly saith, there are admirable Pleasures in Contemplation. But that is too high a pitch for this World. We may sometimes find a Capacity for such things in our Minds, and some Fore-tastes, some relishes of a divine and heavenly state here. But alas! they are very short, and transitory; as well as rare; and we are not able to bear lasting impressions of divine Light in this World. As appears by *St. Peter*, when he saw Christ transfigured: What a Confusion of Thoughts did he fall into upon the sight of Christ, and *Moses*, and *Elias*, in their Glory? The Scripture saith, *he knew not what he said*, being under Astonishment at so glorious a Sight. And if this state cannot bear the sight of a glorified Body, how much less the sight of God himself? So that this Contemplation of God, wherein our Happiness lies, must be reserved for another and a better state.

2. The *Seeing the Lord*, wherein our Happiness consists, implies not only clearness of Apprehension, but fulness of Satisfaction. And where there is so great Excellency in the Object, so great Suitableness in the Faculties, so great Nearness and Capacity in enjoying it, so much Certainty and Freedom from the Fears of losing it, there cannot but be a mighty satisfaction of Mind; especially where we suppose a Love suitable to the Excellency of the Object. Some do suppose, that to all this there will be a gradual Increase in Knowledge then; that the Mind will not at first be filled with all the Idea's of God's infinite Perfections which it is capable of receiving; and that the Mind may improve in the Knowledge of other things which may contribute to its Happiness. We must not suppose any Imperfection, or Fear, or Doubt, from Error or Ignorance; but whether there may not be a continual Desire of improving in the Knowledge of the most excellent Things, and a Satisfaction arising from that Improvement, there is nothing in the Happiness of that state which makes it improbable. For the Happiness of an intellectual finite Being lies in the gradual Improvement of it self; and there is no Satisfaction greater to the Mind, than the Discovery of Truth in the several Degrees and Excellencies of it. We all grant that the Divine Excellencies are so infinite, that it is impossible

the Mind of Man should be capable to comprehend them, although it be in a state of Happiness: why then may we not suppose a continual increase of the Knowledge of them, and of what other things tend to satisfaction and intellectual Pleasure? which is no more inconsistent with the Happiness of that state, than it was in *Adam* in *Paradise*, or the *Humane Nature* of *Christ* improving in *Wisdom*, or the *Angel's* learning by the *Church*. Some think, this Expression of *Seeing the Lord* relates immediately to the Person of our Lord and Saviour. And it is certain, that the Happiness of Heaven is set forth in the New Testament by being with *Christ*. *That where I am there ye may be also. Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our Life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Then shall we ever be with the Lord*: Thence it is called, *The everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Yet we are not to suppose, that all the Happiness of Heaven consists in the Contemplation of the Person of our Mediator in his glorious Kingdom; for God only as the supreme Good, can make us happy: but *Christ*, as Mediator, doth endear that Happiness to us, as being the Purchase of his Blood, whereby he hath reconciled us to God, and is become the *Author of eternal Salvation unto all them that obey him*. But in this Epistle the Apostle sets forth *Christ* as our High-priest and Mediator, rather than as the immediate Object of our Happiness; and therefore it is more agreeable to the scope and design of this Epistle, to understand this Expression of the future Happiness of good Men in the Enjoyment of God as the supreme Good, which alone can make us happy.

II. The Conditions here implied in order to it; *Peace with all men, and Holiness*.

Peace and Holiness may be taken two ways:

1. As to the inward Temper of Mind necessary in order to them.
2. As to those outward Acts which are necessary for the following after them.

1. As to the inward Temper of Mind; and that I shall consider,

1. As to Peace.

2. As to Holiness.

1. As to *Peace with all men*. Christianity is certainly the best natur'd Religion in the World: for it makes those things our necessary Duties in order to another World, which are most for our mutual Advantage in this World. What can be more tender and obliging to Mankind, than to make it here as necessary a Duty to *follow Peace with all men*, as to *follow Holiness*, since Holiness is the good Temper of our Minds towards God, as Peaceableness is towards Men?

Two Things are here to be spoken to:

1. What it is to *follow Peace with all men*.

2. Whence it comes to pass that men so much neglect it.

1. What it is to *follow Peace with all men*.

1. It is to be of a peaceable Temper as to matters of Religion, or of a Mind always inclined to Peace with others, so far as is consistent with our Duty to God. The Apostle doth not imply that therefore they were to comply with every thing that might be offer'd them in order to Peace, for then they must have renounced their Religion to obtain Peace; for their Brethren of the Jewish Nation hated them to the Death, and persecuted them so, as there were no terms of Peace with them, but denying the Faith of *Christ*. *Peace* must still be consistent with



with *Holiness*. We must not rob God of his Honour for Peace sake, *i. e.* in things that are plain and clear: For, otherwise in matters of Doubt and Scruple, where the Publick Safety and the Law go one way, and a Man's Doubt carries him another, a modest and humble Christian Temper will yield a great deal for Peace sake: but where a Man cannot yield without breaking his Peace with God, there no Man's Obligation to Peace can make void his superior Obligation to God: The Case was plain in *St. Paul* in the matter of Circumcision, where it promoted the common Interest of Religion, there he complied, as in *Timothy's* Case: but where it did not, there he opposed it, as among the *Galatians*, for there it was introduced as a Design to bring in the whole Law. The same may be applied to the Ceremonies of our Church; if they were among us introductive of Popery, the Arguments of Dissenters would be stronger against them: but it is apparent they are not, they cannot be, because the Doctrine of our Church is opposite to it. And therefore Ceremonies signify according to the Doctrine of the Church which enjoins them: The use of Ceremonies in the Church of *Rome*, implies Merit and Efficacy, because that Church teaches those Doctrines: In our Church they cannot, because we disown them, and declare against them. Kneeling at the Sacrament, with them implies Adoration of the Host, because that Church requires it; with us it cannot, because we do utterly deny it. And the general Sense of the Church is to put a Sense and Meaning on indifferent Things; and not what Construction any particular person may put upon them. And it argues an unquiet and unpeaceable Temper, to put another Construction upon them than the Church it self declares, yea directly contrary to the open and avow'd Sense of it.

2. As to Matters of private Differences among Men upon other Accounts. For such will happen; and the more Christian any Temper is, the more it is willing and ready to compose them, and to yield as far as is consistent with Justice and Conscience in order to them, yea to abate of the strict Rigour of Justice for so good an End. For, Peace is so valuable a thing, so pleasing to God, so useful to the World, that a good Man will go a great way, even to his own disadvantage, for Peace sake. And where Differences are carried on, and come to Animosities and Heats, there are certainly Faults on both sides, and therefore there must be mutual Forgiveness, not a meer passing over what is past, but a sincere and hearty Reconciliation: for, otherwise the Wound is but skinned over, and on the next occasion the ulcerated Matter within will break out again. *St. Paul* goes to the bottom when he saith, *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* Can any thing be more obliging than this? The Example of God himself towards you, and the hopes of your own Forgiveness; which our Saviour expressly declares depends upon this: *For, if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive yours.* And what can be said worse than that his Sins shall not be forgiven? For then he stands exposed to the Wrath of God, *who is a consuming fire; and therefore it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,* as our Apostle saith.

Eph 4: 31, 32.

Matt. 6.15.

Hebr. 12:

29. 10. 32.

2. Whence comes it to pass, that so few do follow Peace with all men? From giving way to their violent and unreasonable Passions.

The Obligations to follow Peace are so great, so just, so agreeable to the Honor of God, and to the common Interests of Mankind, that one may wonder so many Arguments should be used in Scripture to put Men upon it, and so many vehement Exhortations to persuade Christians to the Practice of it. *If it be possible, saith St. Paul, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Have salt in your selves, and have peace one with another, saith our Saviour. If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any bowels and mercy, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, &c.* What need all this force of Perswasion? Do not Men know how much it is their own Interest and Happiness to live in Peace and Unity with each other? But notwithstanding all this, Men do not in other things pursue what makes most for their Happiness, and therefore it is less wonder they do not in this.

What is it then which makes them so averse to this Duty? St. James gives a sad and true Account of it. *From whence come wars and brawlings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts, which war in your members?* If we were at Peace at home, we should be so abroad; i. e. if we subdued our unruly and disorderly Passions within our selves, we should live more easily and quietly with others. Among which, these deserve our Reflection and Consideration.

1. Immoderate Self-love. There is a Love of our selves which is founded in Nature and Reason, and is made the Measure of our Love to our Neighbour: *For we are to love our Neighbour as our selves.* And if there were no due Love of our selves, there could be none of our Neighbour. But this Love of our selves, which is so consistent with the Love of our Neighbour, can be no Enemy to our Peace: for none can live more quietly and peaceably than those who love their Neighbours as themselves. But there is a Self-love, which the Scripture condemns, because it makes Men peevish and froward, uneasy to themselves and to their Neighbours, filling them with Jealousies and Suspicions of others, with respect to themselves, making them apt to mistrust the Intentions and Designs of others towards them; and so producing Ill-will towards them; and where that hath once got into Men's Hearts, there can be no long Peace with those they bear a secret Grudge and Ill-will to. The bottom of all is, they have a wonderful Value for themselves and those Opinions, and Notions, and Parties, and Factions they happen to be engaged in; and these they make the measure of their Esteem and Love of others. As far as they comply and suit with them, so far they love them, and no farther. If we ask, Cannot good Men differ about some things, and yet be good still? Yes. Cannot such love one another notwithstanding such Difference? No doubt they ought. Whence comes it then that a small Difference in Opinion is so apt to make a breach in Affection? In plain truth it is, every one would be thought to be infallible, if for shame they durst to pretend to it; and they have so good an Opinion of themselves, that they cannot bear such as do not submit to them. From hence arise Quarrellings and Disputings, and ill Language, not becoming Men or Christians. But all this comes from their setting up themselves and their own Notions and Practices, which they would make a Rule to the rest of the World; and if others have the same Opinion of themselves, it is impossible but there must be everlasting Clashings and Disputings; and from thence falling

falling into different Parties and Factions. Which can never be prevented till they come to more reasonable Opinions of themselves, and more charitable and kind towards others. When St. Paul would persuade the Christians to Unity, he knew of no better means than this, *In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.* i. e. You know your own Imperfections better than you can do others; and you are bound to judge the best of what you cannot know: and then you cannot but have such Lowliness of Mind, to prefer the Piety and Virtue of others before your own. And if you would act according to this Rule, you would live very kindly and peaceably together. But besides this, the Apostle tells them there is a common Interest to be regarded above their own; *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others,* i. e. on those things wherein they are all concerned. Which he after explains, *All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.* Their own Fancies, and Opinions, and Parties, and not that which makes for the common Interest and Advantage of our holy Religion. And till they come to prefer that before the other, there is little hopes of true Christian Peace.

2. Secret Animosity against others. Which if taken up without cause, is *Malice* and *Hatred*; if upon Provocations, it is *Wrath* and *Anger*; if upon Jealousies and Suspicions, it is *Ill-will*; which is apt to shew it self when occasion is offered; and oft-times it stirs them up to seek occasion for it: And a false and imaginary Impression on Men's Minds will raise as great a flame in their Hearts one against another, as if it were real. How often have persons lived in great Fewds against each other upon meer Suspicions? and when they have more freely conversed with each other, have been ashamed of their own Folly? But there are not many who suffer themselves to cool so much, as to consider, whether there were any real Cause for their Heats or not; for they are carried on with Violence and Precipitation, as they are led by their own Passions; and never reflect on the Motive or the Consequence of them. If Men once happen to engage in a Party, they presently run into all the Heats and Animosities of it; they must think, and judge, and talk, and act as the rest do, or else they are look'd on as false Brethren, and such as are not to be trusted. A Party must be a distinct Body from the rest, and have Interests of its own to carry on, and in order thereto must use such means as are necessary for its Support; which can never be done without weakning the Publick Interest, and drawing that to it self, like an Imposthume in the Body, which ought to have gone to the common Support. And when one Party comes to be set up against another, there can be nothing more mischievous and pernicious to the common Concernments of all; for that takes off all their Zeal for the common Good, and fills them with Fears and Jealousies of each other, till they come from Suspicions to Hatred and Animosities against each other. A Kingdom broken into Parties is certainly divided against it self, and therefore *cannot stand*, as our Saviour himself tells us in the case of the Kingdom of the Devil. All the Subtilty, and Activity, and designs of the Devil and his Agents, cannot support their own Kingdom, if once they fell into Factions among themselves. The Devil is the great Promoter of Factions among others, but he can bear none at home; or rather, the Interest of his Kingdom will not permit it: And they understand it so well, as to carry on their common design with joint Endeavours. But Mankind are not so bad,

nor in this respect so wise, as the Devils; they propose a better End to themselves, and so are not so bad as they: but when they propose a good End, as they think, they know not how to manage it, but upon any slight Occasions break it into pieces, and by their mutual Animosities not only hinder their good End, but, unless God in his Wisdom and Mercy prevent it, ruin and destroy each other. So that were there not a wise Providence of God to govern the World, I should hardly ever hope to see a good Design come to a good End: For, Men are so peevish and froward, or so weak and captious, or so fickle and uncertain, or so jealous and suspicious of one another, that it is very hard to bring them into what makes for their common Interest, and much harder to keep them together in the pursuit of it. And instead of *following Peace with all men*, they are hardly long at Peace with any, no not with themselves. And those inward Passions which disturb them at home, make them very uneasy to the rest of the World.

3. The Love of this World. Which doth not work alike in all; but it makes them all very uneasy and troublesome to those who stand in their way. The Hopes and Expectations of another World make Men willing to pass as quietly through this as they can, giving as little disturbance to others as may be; and passing by Injuries and Provocations, as intended for a trial of their Meekness, and an exercise of their Patience. But when Men's hearts are set upon this World, there is a train of very uneasy Passions which follow it, such as inordinate Desires, disquieting Fears, unreasonable Discontents; and where these are, there can be no *following after Peace*, but a restless pursuit of their own Ends, and opposition to all such as stand in the way of them. What Peace can there be in an ambitious or covetous Mind, which is ready to sacrifice every thing to its own designs? Such Mens Love and Hatred are not according to the measures of Good and Evil, but as they serve or obstruct them in their particular Aims. They really love none but themselves, but they love to make use of others to serve themselves; and when they apprehend them to stand in their way, they hate and malign, and cross and undermine them all they can. And how is it possible then to be at Peace with them? So that in order to Peace it is absolutely necessary that Men subdue their inclinations to this World, that they have a just and due Estimate of Things as to their Use, and bring their Desires within a reasonable compass, and then they will not be so apt to mistrust and hate others as standing in their way to Preferment or Riches. A modest, humble, contented Mind, is of it self inclined to Peace with all Men, for it sees no such occasion of striving or contending with others: But a proud, conceited, ambitious Temper, is very apt to be quarrelsome, because it raises Mens Expectations, and fills them with higher Thoughts of their own Deserts, and then they easily quarrel with such as do not answer their unreasonable Expectations; as the World is so cross that it seldom doth: and therefore they are the most peevish and passionate, the most easily provoked, and the most hardly reconciled of any sort of Men. If we would therefore have Peace with others, we must begin it with our selves, and retrench all inordinate desires as to this World.

4. Mistaken Zeal. Zeal, in the general, is nothing but an earnest prosecution of what we aim at; and is therefore good or evil according to the nature and degree of that which we propose to our selves. If it be a thing in it self good, and to be desired above all other things, as

our chief Good, we can never be too much concerned about it, and therefore cannot have too much Zeal for it. If it be a thing good in its kind, as a means to our end, our Zeal ought to be in proportion to it; and so far as it is thus good, we ought to be zealously affected towards it. But it may so happen, that we may have wrong Apprehensions concerning the Necessity and Usefulness of that which we are so zealous for; and then if we mistake the thing, and suppose that to be necessary or useful which is not so; or if we mistake the degree, when we place it above what it deserves, and are zealous for it accordingly, this is mistaken Zeal. And it is observable that true Zeal is accompanied with Meekness, Patience, Gentleness, Long-suffering, Kindness towards others; so false and mistaken Zeal sours and embitters the Spirits of Men, makes them fretful and impatient of the least Contradiction, morose and inflexible, never yielding to the Conviction of others, but maintaining every thing with an invincible Stiffness; which is a Temper as repugnant to Ingenuity and a peaceable Disposition, as Light to Darkness. For, how is it possible there should be such a thing as Peace among Men, if every Man maintains his point, and thinks it his Duty to yield in nothing? And, upon the same common Reason, every Man hath an equal Right to defend himself; for, no Man is born Master of another Man's Judgment, but Truth and Reason lie in common for all. It is true, every one pretends to it; but because so many pretend to it who differ among themselves, it is certain some must be mistaken: And because every Man thinks all who differ from himself are so, and the number of those who differ is great, and their Reasons seem as considerable to them as his can do to himself; therefore he ought not to be presumptuous and imposing, not stiff and untractable, but with Patience and Modesty to weigh and consider all that is against him as well as for him. And this will in all Differences of Opinion and Practice tend to make Men, next to the Truths of greatest Consequence, to endeavour after Peace, and in lesser matters to yield as far as is consistent with our necessary Duty to God and our Neighbour.

2. I shall now consider *Holiness* with respect to the inward Temper and Disposition of Mind. And that implies these things.

1. An inward Regard to God and Religion, as our main care and business.

2. A constant Endeavour after Purity of Heart.

1. An inward Regard to God and Religion, as our main care and business. It's possible for Men to be of meek and peaceable Dispositions, avoiding any occasion of Quarrel and Contentions, out of a natural Softness and easiness of Temper, or out of a Regard to their own Quiet and Safety; but this is not such a Temper as will carry one to Heaven; that must suppose one's Mind raised to a higher pitch, and acting upon better Principles, having a Mind deeply affected with the Sense of that Duty which we owe to God, and the Regard we ought to have, above all things, to his Commands. *Holiness* is the renewing the Image of God in our Souls: It is that inward Principle of Grace which makes us to be the Sons of God; it is that Participation of the Divine Nature, whereby we become like to God, and are made meet for Heaven. For it is not to be supposed that a carnal, earthly, sensual, or profane Mind, can be fitted for the *Seeing the Lord*; for, really, it can be no Happiness for such a one to see him; nay, the sight of a Being so opposite to his own Temper would be very uneasie

easie and displeasing to him. It is a Contradiction in Morality, to suppose one to be happy in that which he cannot love. How can a Man of a wicked, loose, irreligious temper of Mind, love God? And if he cannot love him, what nonsense is it for him to hope to be happy in enjoying him? No, as sure as there is a Heaven, there must be a suitable disposition of Mind to make one capable of the Happiness of it. And that not a sudden momentary Change, as it were in passing between this World and the other; but it must be by a gradual, serious, and effectual Change wrought in the whole Soul; whereby of earthly and carnal, the Disposition becomes spiritual and heavenly, *i. e.* it hath other Notions of God and Religion than it had before: it looks upon Religion, not as a matter of Form or Custom, but as a matter of Choise and Delight; as a thing which tends to the best end in the World, *viz.* fitting us for Heaven. And accordingly the bent and inclination of the Mind is carried towards God and Heaven. This the Scripture calls, *being spiritually minded; being renew'd in the spirit of our minds; being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, being born again of the spirit*: with many other Expressions to the same purpose; all which imply an absolute necessity of an inward Change in order to the Happiness of another Life. Not a meer Change of Opinion, or of a Party, or of some Inclinations, but, in short, it is one of the greatest Changes in the World, although not so discernible; for it is the Change of the whole Soul, in Judgment; Will; and Affection, and that from the Love of Sin to the Love of God.

2. There must be a constant Endeavour after Purity of Heart. Our Saviour looks on this as the proper Qualification of those who are to see God. But who can say, his Heart is pure? Many may abstain from outward Acts of Wickedness, who may have too many inward Inclinations to it. Are all those Hearts impure which have any Motions or Inclinations to Evil? Yes; if they be allow'd and foster'd, and given way to: for then, in the sight of God, the inward Lust is as impure as the outward Act. This hath more Aggravations from Circumstances, as to Injustice, Indecency, Scandal, &c. but as to the Heart it self, that is as much defiled in one as in the other. But it must be in this as in other Passions, the Cure is not to be wrought in an Instant, but there must be constant Watch and Care, by all means, to subdue and keep under all such irregular Motions, and *to cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

Matth.  
5. 8.

II. It is not enough that there be an inward temper of Mind thus disposed to Peace and Holiness, but *we must follow after them.* *i. e.* We must do what we can to compass them, although there be Difficulty in it.

I. For *Peace*; We are not to content our selves with the terms of Peace when they are offer'd, but we must seek after them our selves: *Go and be reconciled to thy Brother*, saith Christ. How can this be? What if he will not be reconciled to thee? Do thy endeavour; be sure the Fault lies not at your door. But must I neglect the Duty I owe to God, to seek to be reconciled to my Brother? Hath he no more regard to his own Service, than to bid us leave our Gifts at the Altar, and hunt up and down for our angry Brother, to seek to be reconciled to him; when it may be he will be farther from it, because I seek it? Do not trouble your selves about God's Honour and Service in this matter; he will be served in the way himself hath appointed; and our Saviour saith

faith plainly, *Go first and be reconciled to thy Brother*: Which shews how much God hates the bringing to his Service an unpeaceable and implacable Temper; and how much he values our common Good before our Oblations to him. Although Men do hate one another, yet still they pretend to love God; and therefore they see no reason why this should hinder his Service. But God knows best what Service is most pleasing to himself; and he shews his great tenderness to Mankind, when he prefers their mutual Love before his own immediate Service. How much then ought we to value it, when God himself doth so? How should we pursue after the things which make for mutual Peace, even when it seems to fly from us? The World is so full of Ill-nature and Ill-will, that none do expose themselves more to the hatred of others, than the true Lovers of Peace. But this ought not to discourage any from the pursuit of it, as long as it is so pleasing to God and so necessary to our Happiness.

2. For *Holiness*; We must pursue after that too. It is not a faint desire, nor a slight endeavour, nor sudden heats, which make up this Holiness which is necessary for Seeing God: But the Love of it must enter deep into our Souls, it must possess our Minds, sway our Wills, and incline our Affections towards the best things; it must carry them off from sensual and carnal Pleasures, and raise our Minds towards more noble and excellent Objects: and make the pursuit of them the greatest End and Business of Life. For our Happiness must be our Choice, and that Choice cannot be made till our Minds be enlighten'd with the Knowledge of Heaven, and our Hearts inflamed with a prevailing desire after it. This is a hard Task to those who are bare Servants to the Flesh, and do not regard any thing of themselves, but what serves the purposes of it; this is hard to those who have accustom'd themselves to carnal Delights, and have thereby harden'd themselves to a Love of Wickedness; this is a hard task to all that find sensual Inclinations and the Temptations of the World and the Devil conspiring together to hinder us from the pursuit of true Holiness.

3. Yet there is a Necessity for all this; for, *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, i. e. Without a Heart duly prepared for Heaven by the hatred of Sin, and the sincere Love of God. For God hath here absolutely declared it; and Happiness is his own Gift, and he hath therefore the right of Appointing his own Conditions: and no Condition is so earnestly, so frequently, so indispensably insisted upon as this. We have reason to believe, that an unholy Soul cannot be happy in the Enjoyment of God; i. e. such a one as makes Sin his choice; but we need go no farther in this matter, than that it is here the plain and express Will of God: for, if we be ever happy, God must make us so; and here he hath declared on what terms he will do it. And he that hopes to have it otherwise, expects to be happy in God against his Will.

Let not therefore any carnal, wilful, presumptuous Sinner, flatter himself with the hopes of seeing God in Heaven, although he hath no regard to him, or to his ways; although he slights and mocks at Holiness here. Of all sorts of Sinners, there is the least hopes of a profane Derider and Scoffer at Religion: other Men may do as bad things, but they have something left within them which may in time reclaim them; but these cast off the very means of reforming them. And as the Apostle saith of *Apostates*, who *sin wilfully* in that manner, that *there is no sacrifice*

*vice for sin* besides that which they have despised, and therefore their Case is desperate; so it is with such who despise Religion: there is no way to make them better but that which they despise, and so long their case is equally desperate. And let not the froward, quarrelsome, fierce, and implacable Man flatter himself that God will pass by this evil Temper of his Mind, for some pretended Love to Religion; for here the Declaration is as express for the Necessity of Peace as Holiness.

*Follow Peace with all men, and Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

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# SERMON XXXVII.

O F T H E

## DIFFERENCES

O F

### GOOD and EVIL.

GENESIS IV. 7.

*If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou dost not well, Sin lieth at the door, &c.*

**T**Hese Words are the more considerable, because spoken by God himself to *Cain*, upon the Displeasure he had unreasonably conceived against his Brother after some extraordinary Testimony of God's Favour to him upon his offering his Sacrifice. Which that we may the better understand, we are to observe,

1. That there was no remarkable difference in the outward Action of *Cain* and *Abel*. For they both offer'd up their Sacrifices to the same God. In those early days of the World, Irreligion was a thing unknown; for, as bad as *Cain* otherwise was as to the inward Temper of his Mind, yet he was not so profane, as wholly to neglect the Worship of God at some solemn Times. For it is said Verse 3. *That in process of time* (or at the end of Days) *it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord.* Whether God had commanded it, or *Adam* appointed it, or their own Reason dictated such an Acknowledgment due to God, as Creator of all things and Benefactor to Mankind in an especial manner; we see *Cain* did not stick at the performance of it: and he is mention'd as doing it before *Abel*, Vers. 4. *And Abel also he brought of the firstling of his flock, &c.* The Offering of *Cain* seems in it self more reasonable than that of *Abel*; because there was no taking away the Life of any of God's Creatures to please the Creator, as there was in *Abel's*: which makes it reasonable for us to conclude, there was a Divine Institution for Sacrifices.

2. That there was a remarkable Difference as to God's Acceptance. *For God had respect unto Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.* He saw into their different Tempers and Dispositions

Heb. 11.4. tions of Mind, wherewith they offer'd Sacrifice; and accordingly he shew'd that one was more pleasing to him than the other. *For by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.* Which must be by some extraordinary and visible manner; because this gave the occasion to Cain's Indignation against his Brother: for it is said, Ver. 5. *And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.* Here was a great mixture of violent and unreasonable Passions in Cain. He could not bear his Brother's being preferred before him; for this filled him with that Vexation and Disturbance which follows an envious Mind, and after breaks out into Rage and Fury, when occasion is given for it. For, as St. John saith, *Cain was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his Brother's righteous.* Which argued a very malignant Disposition of Mind in him; and which discovered it self in his very Countenance: that Passion, of all others, by its mixture of Grief and Hatred, being apt to discolour the Blood so far, as to be discerned by others. But to shew the great Injustice of this Passion in him, God ex postulates with him, Ver. 6. *And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? And to let him see that God was no acceptor of persons, and that there was no Righteousness in him, he adds these Words; If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou dost not well, sin lieth at the door.*

Although there be different Senses and Interpretations of the Words (which I need not trouble you with). yet that which our Translation hath pitched upon, seems to be most natural and genuine. And therein we may consider,

1. The different Nature of Actions: *If thou dost well, and if thou dost not well.*

2. The different consequence of them; *If thou dost well shalt thou not be accepted? and If thou dost not well, sin lieth at the door.*

1. The different Nature of Actions. Here is *doing well* and *not doing well*: and both supposed to be known to Cain; and so far in his power, as that it was his fault if he did not *do well*. For, otherwise the Expostulation loseth its force; and Cain might have answered for himself, that his Will was determin'd to what was *Evil* by some antecedent Cause, which was out of his Power. But God, who best knew the state and condition of Humane Nature, puts it here upon Cain himself to determine the Righteousness of his Dealings from thence, *If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted?*

There is a Generation of Men in the World, who, for the quiet of their own Minds, would run down the differences of Good and Evil in Actions; as though they were nothing but the arbitrary fancies of Men according to the different Influences of Custom and Education: as though doing well were nothing but a moral Fashion of appearing suitable to the Country we live in; which varies as much as the different Habits and Languages of Men do: so that according to such Doctrine, there was really no difference between Cain and Abel; but the Oblation of one must be as acceptable to God as the other, and the Actions of Cain must be as agreeable to reason as those of Abel were. But what will they say to Cain's Murder of his Brother? This was so barbarous and unnatural, that none who have any Reason or Humanity can plead for it. There are then some Actions evil in themselves; and

and if there are so, there must be some certain measure whereby we are to judge of the Good or Evil of Actions. Which it is of great concernment to enquire into, because thereon depends the Foundation of Religion and Piety, the Practice and Esteem of Vertue, the Necessity of Repentance, and the Peace and Satisfaction of our Minds:

Therefore I shall prove the different Nature of Actions as to Good and Evil, from these things:

1. The Relation we stand in to God:
2. The Frame of Humane Nature.
3. The Common Interest of Mankind.
4. From the Law which God hath given us:

1. We are to consider the different Nature of Actions from our Relation to God, as our Creator and Benefactor. *Cain* could not be ignorant of this; and he seemed to own it by his Sacrifice: but the great Difference lay, that he did not live under that Sense of God upon his Mind which *Abel* had: When the same Reason would hold for a continual regard to God at all times, as well as at the solemn times of his Worship. It is very absurd to suppose, that God should have infinite Power, and we not be bound to fear him; that he should have infinite Goodness, and we not be bound to love him; that he should have infinite Wisdom, and we not be bound to trust in him, to believe him, to depend upon him, and to submit to his Will. Is it possible to conceive a Creator to give Life and all the Comforts of it to a Creature, that should not be obliged to be thankful to him, and to serve him? And if it be absurd not to be obliged to serve God, it must be a good thing to do it, and evil to neglect or despise his Service; it must be very evil to disown or contemn, or hate, or blaspheme him. So that with respect to God, there must be some things necessarily Good and Evil.

And not only the Foundations of Religion are good and necessary, but the continual Practice of it, in the course of our Lives. This is called *walking with God*, in the case of *Enoch* and *Noah*; *i. e.* living under a continual Sense of the Duty which they owed to him. And the want of this in others, was the cause of the great Degeneracy of the Old World. They could not deny that there was a God, and that it was their Duty to serve him; but they led sensual, careless, and voluptuous Lives, which made them slight and despise Religion. As *Eliphaz* Job 22: 15 in the Book of *Job* expresses it, *Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? which were cut down out of time, and whose foundation was overflown with a flood. Which said unto God, depart from us, and what can the Almighty do for them? Or, as Job himself, They say unto* Job 21: 14 *God depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* This was the provoking Temper of the Old World; when it is said, *That the* Gen. 6: 5 *wickedness of man was great upon earth, and that every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continually.* Which shews, that Profaneness and Irreligion leads men to all manner of Wickedness; and where Religion and the Fear of God doth not give a Check to vicious Inclinations, nothing else will. And to such a monstrous Degeneracy did Mankind then fall, that it is said, *It repented the Lord that he had* 6, 7 *made man upon earth.* The Account which our Saviour gives of it is, *That they minded nothing but eating and drinking, marrying and giving in* Matt. 24: 38 *marriage; i. e.* they had worn out the Sense of God and Religion, and minded only the common Delights and Pleasures of Life:

But such a Degeneracy of Mankind doth by no means prove that the Principles of Religion and Piety are the less certain or useful. Although Men may go a great way towards the rooting out the very Seeds of Religion in their Minds, when they have given themselves up to all manner of Wickedness; yet the Foundation of it standeth sure and firm; and all the Art of Men cannot make the Fear of God an unreasonable or foolish thing. The Principle which those went upon of old seems to have been, that Religion was an useless impertinent thing; *What is the Almighty that we should serve him? or what profit should we have if we pray unto him?* And, *Ye have said, it is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his Ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts.* But, on the contrary, Men of the best Minds have had the greatest Sense of the Duty which they owe to God: *It is good for me, saith David, to draw near to God.* And God hath promised to make a difference between them that serve him, and those who disregard his Service: *Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.*

And if God takes such notice whether we serve him or not, what colour or pretence can we have for not doing it; since, if God doth expect it at our hands, we can have no reason to deny it? For we are under all the Obligations of Duty to him, being made by him, and living continually upon him. If there be no such thing as Obligation can be laid upon Mankind, then indeed we may be exempt from any such Duty as Religion; but if Humane Nature can be obliged to any thing, it must be to the Service of God: for nothing can take deeper hold of us, than what enters into our very Beings, and all the Enjoyments and Comforts of this Life, and all the Hopes and Expectations of a better. Those who seem to have no great Value or Esteem for Religion, yet pretend to have a mighty regard for natural Justice and Gratitude to Benefactors. Now if Men would attend to the due measure of things, they would find the very same Obligation in a higher manner, to the Duties of God's Service. *A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master; if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear, saith the Lord of hosts?* Where we see God condescends to argue from a parity of Reason in those cases; and it must hold much stronger, since he is the most compassionate Father, and the best Master, as well as the supreme Lord and Ruler over all. If therefore Obligation makes a thing good, then the serving God according to his own Will, which is the best Rule of his Service, is one of the most certain ways of doing well.

2. Another way to find out the Differences of Good and Evil, is from the Consideration of the peculiar Frame of our Natures. We cannot deny, that those Beings which are inferiour to us do well when they pursue the proper Ends they were made for. And when they act according to the proper Objects of their several Senses, they do nothing amiss: for none can blame them for eating and drinking what Nature directs them to, because they have no higher Principle to govern them: but it cannot in Reason be supposed to be the Case, where God hath endued Creatures with Faculties above Sense, and which are able to controul and govern the Inclinations which we have in common with Brutes. We find in them, that Nature limits and determines their Appetites within certain bounds, which they have no desire to transgress.

gress. Nature hath not dealt so with Mankind; for their Desires are impetuous and boundless; but God hath given them Reason and Understanding to direct them, and to judge what is fit and agreeable to them; and not meerly with respect to the Inclinations of Sense, but to the Dictates of Reason. The brute Creatures which govern themselves by Nature, drink no more than Nature requires; but Mankind grow more than brutish in that matter, although they have Understanding to govern them: and, if it were possible, would by their Excesses become ridiculous even to the Brutes. But now Sobriety, Temperance, and Chastity, are things most becoming Mankind, as God hath given a superiour Faculty to meer Inclination, and whatsoever is agreeable to that is good, and whatsoever is repugnant to it is evil.

The force of this Argument to prove the natural Differences of Good and Evil, lies in these things:

1. That superior Faculties must have a superior Good agreeable to them. For, as the inferior, *viz.* the Sensitive, are allow'd to have something agreeing and disagreeing to them; so in all reason it ought to be in what is as truly Natural, but of a higher kind. For, why should we suppose a Being to be worse because it is better made? And it would be worse, if there were not some Perfection proper to it. And that must be Good: and what is repugnant is Evil.

2. No Faculty doth make its Object, but supposes it. The Sense of Seeing doth not make a visible Object, nor hearing Sounds: and so as to other Senses; the Objects are already in being, but our Senses make us capable of perceiving them. And so it is allow'd to be as to the Object of our Understanding, *viz.* as to Truth and Falshood; for no Men are so sottish to imagine that we make a thing true by believing it, or false by not believing it. And the same Reason holds as to our Wills or reasonable Desires, which must have an Object above that of our Senses, and such as is so agreeable to them as tends to their Perfection; which can be nothing but Vertue and Goodness: which every Man would certainly choose for its own sake, if he acted according to Reason, and were not drawn away by sensual Motives, which are by no means agreeable to such Faculties which are superior to Sense.

3. We may judge of what is Good and Evil by the common Interest and Sense of Mankind. Which we are not to judge of by the Opinion of Wise Men so much as by what is thought to be praise-worthy among all Men, and what tends to advance the common Good and Interest of all. It is possible some People may be mistaken as to their Notions of some particular things, accounting some Good which others account Evil; but in the general Mankind are agreed, that Fidelity, Justice, Temperance, and Chastity do more advance the common Interest of Mankind than the contrary. So that there can be no dispute, but such things do promote a common Interest, and the contrary are repugnant to it: and therefore some of these are Good and others Evil: for, we have much more reason to deduce the Nature of Good from what is general and common, than from what is agreeable to particular Inclinations. And that was the great mistake of the Philosophers of old, to take the Nature of Good and Evil from particular Natures, and not from the general Good. I confess that is really and truly Good which suits with our reason, and advances our Happiness; but besides and beyond this, there is a common Good of Mankind: and what-ever tends to promote it is Good to all Men, and what is contrary to it is Evil.

But

But to deduce this Argument more plainly, we are to consider these things.

1. There are some things so universally esteemed, that even those who do not practise them cannot but commend them. Which shews an Excellency in the things themselves, which makes them commend in others what they do not practise themselves. For, Mankind are apt to be very partial as to their own Practices (because they would fain be thought well of,) but when they approve Vertue in others although themselves are vicious, it shews that there is something *Praise-worthy* in it. As the restraint of Anger, and Lust, Gratitude to Benefactors, Obedience to Parents, Justice and Mercy, Magnanimity and Liberality, are things of such universal Esteem, that those who do not act according to these Vertues, yet cannot but commend and applaud such as are remarkable Examples of them. And it is a certain sign that Vertue hath an Excellency and Goodness in it in the esteem of Mankind, because those who have it not, yet where they design to be esteemed, find it necessary to pretend to it; and to remove the Prejudices which the suspicion of Vice doth raise as to their Reputation. Which shews that they do not think there can be any real or just Esteem of any person, but according to the Opinion which they have of his Vertue.

2. The common Interest of Mankind is inconsistent with any thing but Vertue and Goodness. For, whatever breaks the Bounds and Measures of that, tends to the Overthrow of the welfare of Humane Society; which cannot be upheld without Men's regulating their Passions, and consulting the Good of others, as well as their own. That which tends to make any one Man happy, tends to make many so when they are joined together. And it is not only the Interest of the Governed, but of the Governours too, whose Security lies very much in the Opinion which Mankind have of their Vertue. *Polybius* discoursing of the several Changes of Government, and the Causes of them, imputes the former chiefly to moral Causes. For saith he, a Family is the Beginning of Government: and when Children are grown up, and prove disobedient to Parents, the rest of Mankind condemn them as ungrateful to those who have taken so much care of them, and undergone so much for them. For there is this Difference between Mankind and other Creatures, that if any do amiss among the Brutes, the rest take no notice of it: but Mankind have Reason and Understanding to judge, and to compare, and to put a Difference, and to foresee the Mischiefs which such bad Examples may bring upon others. The same happens if Men return Injuries for Kindnesses in other cases; all that hear of it are displeas'd at it, because of the evil Consequences of such things. From hence Men have a notion in their Minds of what is fitting to be done, and what force it ought to have upon them. And this is the Foundation and Rule of Righteousness. So, on the other side, one that is willing to expose himself to danger for the Benefit of others, Mankind are apt to applaud and admire him, and to desire him to take the care of them. And this, he saith, was the Original of Government; which was intended not only as a Reward of Vertue, but to put such a one into a capacity of rewarding it in others. And in this case the People have no dreadful Apprehensions of his Power, but cheerfully and willingly put themselves under it, and endeavour to preserve it, even to his Old Age, against all Attempts and Conspiracies. And because their Hopes are great as to such as come from one so beloved and

and esteemed, therefore they continue his Posterity in the Succession of the same Power. But when they find them degenerate, they choose such as are most eminent for Vertue and Wisdom. And when the Governours fall into vicious Practices, such as Luxury, and Riot, and Wantonness, and Oppression, the People lose their Esteem and Reverence for them, and by degrees grow weary and look out for others to Rule over them. And this he pursues through the several Changes and Revolutions of Governments. But this is sufficient for my design; *viz.* To shew that Vertue is a necessary Means for the *Publick Good*.

4. The Nature of Good and Evil is to be taken from the Law which God hath given as a Rule of our Actions. No doubt *Cain* had at that time a Rule sufficient to put a difference between Good and Evil; otherwise these Words had signified nothing: For, if he could not know Good and Evil from each other, how could God say to him, *If thou dost well shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou dost not well, Sin lieth at the door?* For how could he do that which he could not know? But since God supposes he might *do well*, he must suppose that he knew how to do it. But we have no Account of any Revelation God had then made of what Actions were Good and what were Evil; and therefore we must suppose that God had planted such a Law in his Heart; which might be sufficient to put a Difference between doing well and doing ill. If *Abel* knew his Duty only by Inspiration, *Cain* could not have been blamed for not doing the Duty which God did not vouchsafe to let him know. But God's laying the blame on *Cain* for not doing so well as *Abel*, doth imply that they both equally understood their Duty, although they did not equally perform it. Which shews, that even in this lapsed Condition there is a Law engraven in the Hearts of Men, which shews them what is good and what is evil. And this *St. Paul* Rom. 2: 14, 15. affirms, when Mankind were under the greatest Degeneracy, and when it was his particular design to prove it. But it cannot be denied that as the World encreased in Wickedness, this Law of Nature was very much defaced and corrupted; yet not so far, as to take away Mens Obligation; for then their bad Actions would have been no Sins to them, because they would have laboured under invincible Ignorance; which must have excused them. But we find God severely punishing the old World for the great Corruption of it. And afterwards, not only the five Cities, for those great Sins which some Philosophers thought indifferent; but the *Amorites* and *Canaanites*, as God expressly declares: Gen 15:16. Levit. 18: 27. *For all these abominations have the men of the land done which were before you, and the land is defiled.* Those Abominations were incestuous Marriages, and other gross Pollutions, which God not only declared to be very loathsome to him, but that he had actually punished those Nations for them. Which shews that God's Displeasure against Sin is not to be measured by the Apprehensions those have of it who commit it, when it is through their own Fault, that they come to have meaner Apprehensions of it. If Men degenerate so far, as to fall into a *Reprobate Sense*, i. e. to have lost their Apprehensions of the Evil and Danger of their Sins, God may justly punish them notwithstanding; but then the Justice of the Punishment lay in this, that they wilfully corrupted their own Judgments. We cannot deny what *Sextus Empiricus* so much insists upon, *viz.* That some People did not apprehend those things to be Evil which others did: as Robbery was thought indifferent among the *Cilicians*, Theft among the *Lacedæmonians*, Murder among the *Gladiators* Pyrrhon. Hypoc. 1.3. p. 154.

tors at Rome, Incestuous Marriages among the *Persians* and by some Philosophers, and other Acts of Uncleanness by the *Thebans* and the greatest Stoicks. But these Instances do not overthrow the natural Differences of Good and Evil, because we do not deny that Men may degenerate in their Opinions as well as Practices; and these would not have been so remarkable, if they had not herein contradicted the Sense of the rest of Mankind. And there may be Monsters in Morality as well as Nature; which are to be no rule for the whole kind. But in this case we are to compare their Opinions with others; and judge which is most reasonable and agreeable to Nature. But herein we have a great advantage by the Law of God, which shortly and clearly determines what Actions are good and pleasing to God, and what are evil and displeasing to him, and which he will punish Mankind for committing. This Law of God was in most things plain and clear as delivered by *Moses*, so far as respects the great Instances of our Duty to God and our Neighbour; but it is delivered with more Advantage to us in the New Testament. By which we may more easily understand what things are pleasing and displeasing to God: so that we cannot be ignorant of what is Good and Evil without our own Fault. And what is our Fault cannot be our Excuse. I do not here speak of the Subtilties of Morality, and nice Cases, but of the main Strokes of our Duty; and such things which the Favour or Displeasure of God depend upon.

But it may be asked, Whence it comes to pass that Mankind should lose the Notion of Good and Evil so much as to need a Divine Law to reinforce it, when they keep so exactly the Notion of what is pleasant or hurtful to their Senses? I answer,

1. The Sense hath nothing to corrupt its Judgment, supposing all things necessary for the right passing it. If there be a proper Object, a sound Faculty, a due *Medium*, the Sense will judge aright; for its Judgment is determined by those things: but it is not so in the Judgment which the Mind passes upon Good or Evil; for there is a violent Inclination one way more than the other; and there is to be a Consideration and weighing things before a true Judgment: But although Mankind have all the Faculties entire for right judging, yet a great part of Mankind do not love to use them about these matters, and follow their Inclinations, which are to what is evil: and when they are thus pre-engaged, they are willing to think the best of themselves, and so would fain believe that to be good which they are so strongly inclined to; and so are prepossessed before they come to any maturity of Judgment; and their Inclinations so bias their Understandings, as to make them willing to find out any Pretences or Excuses for their Faults. And a willing Mind goes a great way towards Believing.

2. The Reasons of Good and Evil are not so easily understood by Mankind in this degenerate State. That there are some things good, and others evil, is generally allow'd; but why such a thing is good, and another evil, is not so commonly understood, setting aside a Law of God; for that what God forbids is evil, and what he commands is good, Men will readily yield; but when God leaves them to find out the Reasons of Good and Evil antecedently to such a positive Law, they are very apt to mistake, or to set down things so obscurely as not to affect the Consciences of Men. If all the Reasons of Good and Evil depended on the positive Law of God, then, where no such Law is, Men are not capable of being convinced of doing evil; which is directly contrary to St.



*Paul's Doctrine, Romans 2. 14, 15.* But yet it is no easie matter to deduce the Differences of Good and Evil from the bare Dictates of Nature, as appears by the great Differences among Mankind about them, and that in some great Instances, as appears by those already mention'd.

3. Great Examples have tended very much to corrupt Mens Notion of Good and Evil. For few judge for themselves, but take up with the Judgment of others: And what they see them practice they are ready to follow them in supposing that they follow their own Judgments therein: Which is often a great Mistake; for they may act against their own Consciences, and repent of what they do; and if others follow their Examples, they ought to consider the Danger of making Example a Rule where there is not Perfection: For, an imperfect Rule may easily seduce Men, and make them do that as good, which those whom they follow knew to be evil when they did it. It is therefore a false Rule for Men to judge the Opinions of others by their Practices, since their Practices may be against their Opinions; as was observed of many Philosophers of old, and of others since, who ought to have given better Examples.

4. The general spreading of any Vice takes away Men's just Apprehension of the Evil of it. When a Vice is uncommon, Men look on it as a Monster; but when it is generally practised, their Apprehensions change concerning it. We see it daily as to the Practice of any sort of Wickedness; the Commonness of it abates Mens fear of committing it. There are some Sins Humane Nature seems to abhor, out of a Principle of Natural Shame and Modesty, yet where they have once become a common Practice, that sense of Shame is gone, and so they commit Uncleanness with greediness. So *Diodorus Siculus* reports of the old *Gauls*, that they not only committed unnatural Sins, but that they lost all Shame about them. To the same purpose *Aristotle*, *Strabo*, and *Athenæus*, who charges the *Greeks* and *Parsons* with the same. The like is affirmed of the most Eastern Nations by later Writers. Shame is a natural Sense of Decency and Honour; *i. e.* of what becomes us to do, and of what others think of us for the doing it. The more we reflect, and consider our selves and others, the greater sense of Shame we have: but it is possible for Mankind to wear out this by vicious Practices, and then there is no stop to Wickedness left. For the fear of Reproach and Contempt keeps many from doing ill things whom other Considerations would have no great Influence upon. Whatever tends to beget Contempt, is a Cause of Shame; and that arises,

1. From acts of Injustice towards others, taking away something from them which belongs to them. And so Adultery is a shameful Sin, not only for the Filthiness, but the Injustice of it.

2. From the Dishonour they do to themselves. And so other acts of Uncleanness, without such Injustice, are matter of Shame, being repugnant to the Modesty and Dignity of Humane Nature, as well as to the Law of God.

There is a Dishonour, with respect to God, in all Sin; and a Stain and Pollution which follows it: but there are some Sins which carry in them a greater Dishonour to our selves, because they imply a greater Brutishness and Sensuality in them, without any regard to that Reason and Modesty which ought to govern our Actions: and the farther they are from them, the more loathsome and dishonourable they are, because they so much stain and deface the Image of God in Man. And

Diod. Sic.  
1. 5.  
Arist. Polit.  
lit. 1. 7.  
Strabo  
Geogr. 1. 4.  
Athen. 1.  
13. c. 8.  
Varen.  
de Japon.  
c. 20.

there is this Argument of Natural Shame, as to such Sins, that those who commit them are so afraid of the Discovery of them to others, and can so hardly bear the Reflection of them in their own Minds: no Sins, except those of *Cruelty*, being so apt to create an inward Disturbance in the Minds of those who have committed them; and which lie so long upon them, before they can be satisfied that they are forgiven. Which shews a great natural Sense of Shame as to such Sins.

2. These Words acquaint us with the different Consequence of good and evil Actions. And so they may be consider'd.

1. As looking backward, and so giving the Reason why he was not accepted.

2. As looking forward, and so shewing the way how he may be accepted.

1. As giving the Reason why he was not accepted, as *Abel* was. It is of great moment for us to consider here what Reason God himself gives why *Cain* was not accepted as *Abel* was; for we are certain his Reason is the truest, and fittest for us to rest upon. And that is not taken from his secret and unsearchable Decrees, which are far above our reach or comprehension, but he appeals to his own Conscience as to the nature of his Actions, and there he bids him look for the Reason of God's not accepting him. And we are certain God would never put a Man upon a false method of Enquiry. Some say, that God may deceive Mankind, if it be for their Good to be deceived. But the righteous God loveth Righteousness; and he proceeds by those Rules of Righteousness himself which he loves in others. Truth and Goodness are so essential to the Divine Nature, that we may as well suppose the Sun to produce Darkness, as that God should be the Author of any moral Evil: If God had before determin'd *Cain* to do all the Evil he did, and effectually hinder'd him from doing better, it is not reasonable to imagine that afterwards he should thus lay the blame upon *Cain* himself, by saying, that it was his own Fault he was not accepted.

But God knew the corrupt Temper and evil Disposition of his Mind, and that he neither loved God nor his Brother; and this was the true Reason why his Sacrifice was no better accepted. From whence we ought to take notice, that our Services are chiefly valuable in God's sight according to the inward Disposition of our Minds towards God and Goodness. If we truly love God, and inwardly fear, and reverence, and esteem him above all things, we have no reason to doubt the Acceptance of our Services; not for any value which is in them, but to shew his Kindness to those who do their Endeavour to please him. When we have a sincere Regard to the Honour of God, and do what lies in us to do him Service; when our Minds are possessed with due Apprehensions of his Majesty and Goodness, and we therefore serve him because we love him, that makes a Service mean and inconsiderable in it self, to be valued and regarded by him. For, What was it *Abel* could offer up to God, which was so acceptable to him, but a devout, willing, and vertuous Mind? *Cain* had a Fear of God, such as it was; or else he would never have served him at all; but he had no delight in his Service; his Heart being set upon this World, and having either none or very slight Apprehensions of another State. But *Abel* was acted by a more noble and divine Principle, which the Apostle calls Faith; *By Faith he offer'd unto God a more excellent Sacrifice than Cain.* Now this Faith carried *Abel* beyond this visible World, raising his Mind

to Objects out of the view of our Senses, and quickening it to such life and vigour in the acts of Devotion, as if God were discerned as visibly present in his glorious Majesty. And what another kind of Service is that which is performed from such an inflaming Principle of Zeal and Devotion, than that which springs only from a dull Formality, or a lazy, cold, and lifeless Custom? There is as much difference between these, as between Vertue in a Pageant and that which governs the Hearts of Men; the one may seem to move and make a fair shew to Spectators; but the other is a real Principle of Life which hath far greater Influence, though with less appearance. *Cain* could not discern the secret Springs of Devotion in *Abel's* Heart; and because he judged by what appeared, he could see no Reason for such an Inequality between them. He thought God dealt hardly with him; but it was plain he did not: but he could not see as God did. What a difference was there between a Heart hardned and frozen, dead and unconcerned at the very time of Devotion; and a Heart full of Warmth and Zeal towards God; a Heart melting under the apprehensions of infinite Goodness and Love; a Heart deeply sensible of its Duty to God, and raising it self to its utmost vigour in performing it?

But suppose, that for the time *Cain* was affected with some Sense of his Duty, as it is hard to imagine he should not be, when at a solemn time he designed to offer Sacrifice to his Maker; yet this was but like a flash of Lightning, which makes the Heavens seem on fire, but it is presently over, and nothing but Blackness and Storms follow. But true Devotion is a constant Flame, which, like that which is called the Flame of Life, it hath not the appearance of Fire to our Senses, but it hath all the useful and quickning Qualities of it; and that not barely at some particular Seasons, but it keeps up an inward Life and a constant vigour of Mind suitable to the Impressions of Religion. But all *Cain's* Religion had not alter'd or softned the Temper of his Mind; for his Passions were as rough and boisterous after as they were before, being as full of Envy and Hatred against his innocent Brother; yea, they were rather encreased and heightened afterwards.

And this certainly discovers the Difference between true Religion and hypocritical Pretences to it. For, however the Sense of God may for some time seem to awe the Conscience of a Sinner, and to bring him to shew some Regard and Reverence to him in the Acts of his Worship; yet when that is over, if the same froward, quarrelsome, peevish, revengeful, covetous, malicious Temper returns, and rather gains ground and rises to higher degrees, as it did in *Cain*; this shews that Religion never sunk deep into his Soul; but only floated on the surface of it. For if it had, it would have subdued his disorderly Passions; and instead of being so angry with his Brother, because his Sacrifice was more accepted, he would have loved him so much more, as he found him in the Favour of God: and he would have endeavoured to reform whatsoever it was which made his Sacrifice not to be so pleasing to him. And thus I have consider'd these Words in that respect, as they look backward, and give an Account why *Cain's* Sacrifice was not accepted.

2. We may consider them as looking forwards; and so they imply two things.

1. The Possibility yet left of gaining the Favour of God.
2. The only Way of doing it, *viz.* by *doing well.*

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1. The Possibility yet left for gaining the Favour of God. So some render it, *Nonne si emendatio erit?* If thou repentest and amendest shalt thou not be accepted? But if thou goest on in thy Wickedness, Sin lieth at the door. This is a Truth of great Concernment to Mankind, to be satisfied that God will accept such a Sinner if he Repent. Although the differences of Good and Evil be founded in Nature, and there is a natural Congruity between good Actions and the Reward of them, and evil Actions and the Punishment of them; yet such is the Goodness of God, who is both Rewarder and Punisher, that he interposes and offers Mercy to a repenting Sinner. Not that he is obliged to do it; but such is his Love towards his Creatures, that he is not willing they should perish in their Sins. This *Cain* saw in God's dealing with *Adam* after his Transgression, giving him so long a time of Mercy after the severity of the Sanction. This he could not but see by God's expostulating with him rather than punishing of him, although he deserved it so much. Yet such is the Wickedness of Man's Heart, that it runs on to sin, because God forbears to punish; as we see in *Cain*, who hardened his Heart more to Sin, and then fell into Despair.

2. The only way of obtaining the Favour of God, and escaping Punishment, which is by doing Well.

1. What sort of doing Well is required?

2. What Favour may be expected?

1. What sort of doing Well is required? It implies these things:

1. Understanding and Considering the Differences of Good and Evil, without which it is impossible to do it. Many study the Differences of what is profitable, and what not, and know how to govern themselves with respect to it, so as they will be able to judge presently what is like to be gainful to them, and what not; but they are very careless and unconcerned at the way of attaining to Riches; whether it be strictly just and honest, or not; but are ready to allow themselves in a Point of Conscience for a Point of Advantage; *i. e.* If by Lying, or Swearing, or Fraud and Oppression, they can compass their End, they regard not the Manner, so the Thing be done. But where is Conscience, and Truth, and Honesty, and Goodness, all this while? Are not they more valuable than a little Riches? nay, suppose it never so great: Our Saviour thought it extreme Folly to gain the whole World, and to lose the Soul. How is the Soul lost, but when it regards Riches more than a good Conscience? The Soul may be easily lost through Folly and Carelessness, through Wickedness and Vice, through Presumption and Impenitency, but to save a Soul is impossible without mighty Care and Diligence, without considering our Actions, and the due Bounds and Measures of them. Many regard no more in their Actions, than whether what they do be pleasant and agreeable to their sensual Inclinations or not; they study and consider what makes for their Ease and Diversion, for satisfying their Appetites, for pleasing their Palates; for humouring their wanton Desires. But, is nothing else to be minded beyond these things? Is not an eternal Happiness, and the Joys of another Life, to be regarded above these vain, foolish, sensual, bewitching Pleasures of Sense? But there is a strong Inclination to them. I grant it; but it is such as may and ought to be governed by Reason and the Fear of God: and that will bring your desires into better Government; as we see in the case of *Joseph*; the Fear of God struck such an awe upon his Mind, that he presently resisted the Temptation. We should

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lead much better Lives, and have more Peace and Satisfaction in our Minds, if we minded Good and Evil more, and Pleasant and Unpleasant less.

2. Minding the Substance of doing well, more than the outward Shew and Appearance of it. Some Persons have an art of counterfeiting Vertues; and although they have them not, yet they seem to have them in a greater degree than modest and vertuous Men: For, they study to appear to Men, and the others to approve themselves to God. But how should we know the Difference?

1. Those who study to appear well, avoid Sins not as Sins, but as they are scandalous and dishonourable, and bring a Reproach upon Men; but make no scruple of doing an evil Action, which can be easily coloured and disguised to the World: But he that regards doing Well, is afraid of himself more than of the Opinion of others, and stands more in awe of God and his own Conscience, than of all the World besides. On the other side, he that studies to appear to the World, minds not so much what Vertues are pleasing to God, as what are fashionable and in Esteem among Men; but a truly vertuous Mind loves what God loves, embraces Goodness for it self, and never thinks worse of Vertue for being out of Favour with Men.

2. Those who study Shews and Appearances have their particular Seasons and Ways to recommend themselves, and Persons to spread their Reputation abroad for extraordinary Vertues; who set them forth with all the Advantages that may be. They never want Trumpets to give notice of their good Deeds. But they who make it their Business to do Well, have not leisure enough from their Duty to mind or regard the Opinions of others concerning them; they look on Modesty and Humility as some of the best of Vertues; and are content to be despised and neglected in this World, so they may be happy in another.

3. Doing well implies not only a regard to the Actions we do, but to the manner of doing them. Many Men may do some good things, but do not do them well, because they do them as if they did them not; they pray, as if they prayed not; they hear, as if they heard not; and receive the Sacrament, as if they received it not. The thing must be done, and there is an end of it. But a good Mind is careful of it self in Prayer, and Hearing, and Receiving; and not only then, but before and after, because it is afraid of displeasing God by an unsuitable Temper of Mind. So as to all Acts of Charity, it hath as much regard to the Principle and End of such Actions as to the Nature of them.

4. It implies a Care of our Passions as well as of our Actions. *Cain* hitherto failed more within than without. He did the same thing *Abel* did, but not with the same inward Temper. If we do not look within with great Care, it will be impossible to keep all well without: for a boiling Passion will find vent one way or other. Hatred, and Envy, and Lust, only want good Opportunities to shew themselves; like Thieves, that have always the same Disposition, but not the same Opportunities. A good Man is most busie within himself, studying, observing, checking, resisting, diverting, and softening his Passions. Like the careful Husbandman, he plows, and sows, and weeds, and prays, and all in hopes of a good Crop at last.

5. Doing well implies a continual Endeavour to improve in well-doing, *i. e.* not to be satisfied with some good Beginnings and Tendencies towards Vertue and Holiness; which the Apostle calls *perfecting Holiness*

*in the fear of God*; i. e. by endeavouring to grow better; more pure, and spiritual, and heavenly; more disengaged from the World, more ready to do good, more fit and prepared to die. It is not a good sign, to be easily contented and pleased with the measures and degrees of Goodness they think they have attained to. Those who value any thing much, never think they have enough of it. Such is the Excellency of Goodness, that the more they have, the more they admire; and the more they admire, the more they still endeavour after it.

6. It implies a patient Continuance in Well-doing. Not a meer Continuance, but with Patience; and there must be Patience as long as there will be Tryals: And such there will be as long as we continue in such a tempting, uncertain, deceitful World. Never flatter [your selves with the hopes of being at ease here. If we had no Tryals of Patience without us, we have enough within our selves, to find it so hard to get this heavy Body and desponding Mind up the Hill, being so ready to sink and fall backwards: But especially when our Bodies grow sickly and painful, when Diseases make us so unfit for every thing; then there must be a patient continuance in Well-doing, in a stedfast and firm Resolution to submit to the Will of God, and to commit our Souls to him in Well-doing as to a faithful Creator:

7. Doing well implies an universal regard to Well-doing; not meerly in Publick, or in Duties of Worship, but in the whole course of our Lives, as far as the Law of God or Nature extends. We must not think to escape by doing well in some things, if we do ill in others, and know that we do so, and allow our selves in it. For he that so breaketh one Command, is guilty of all. He breaks the Chain in pieces, and shews Contempt of the Law-giver, and want of inward Sincerity towards God. I do not deny, but a greater Regard is to be shew'd to some Duties than to others, because they are of greater Consequence: But still, as far as we know any thing agreeable to God's Will, we ought to do it, and what is contrary to avoid it; or else we have not a sincere Resolution of doing well.

2. What Favour to be expected? The greatest we can desire.

1. Peace with God, which implies Reconciliation, Pardon, Adoption, and Protection. And what can be more desired by us, than to be taken into God's Favour, to have our Sins forgiven, to be owned as his Children, and protected by his Providence? And what can be wanting to those whom God designs to be a Father to? who wants neither Power to supply, nor Goodness to help, nor Wisdom to provide.

2. Peace with our own Consciences. The most inestimable Blessing next to the Favour of God, and only consequent upon it. For how can we be at Peace with our selves, till we have Reason to believe that God is at Peace with us? How can he be quiet in his Mind, who looks on God as his Enemy? For, as his Favour is above all, so his Displeasure is the most dreadful thing in the World.

3. Everlasting Happiness. The best Men may fare ill here. As *Abel* fell a Sacrifice to the Wrath of his Brother. But God had provided a Recompence far beyond what this World could afford him. *Cain* was miserable in his Life, and *Abel* was happy without it. He found, to his Sorrow, Sin lying at his door; when he was a burden to himself, and cried out in the Anguish of his Soul, *My punishment is greater than I can bear.* O the wretched Folly of an obstinate Sinner! No Expostulations even of God himself would keep him off from his Sin; and when

when he had committed it, then Fear, and Horror, and Despair, seized on him, and he lived to be a Terror to others as well as to himself; being a mark of God's Vengeance in this World, when his Brother was happy in another.

Let the Consideration of these things awaken your Minds so far, as above all things to mind doing Well. Other things may please you for a time, but this will be a constant Satisfaction to you. A good Conscience and a contented Mind are the most real and satisfactory Pleasures of Life; but they are not to be had but by Well-doing. For any evil Passion, any vicious Habit, will lay Foundation enough for inward Trouble and Dissatisfaction. And there is no such Foundation of Peace here, as the comfortable Reflections of a good Conscience; nor for the Hopes of Heaven, as a patient Continuance in Well-doing.

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# SERMON XXXVIII.

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## TRANQUILLITY

A N D

## Peace of Mind.

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JOHN XVI. 36.

*These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace; in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*

**T**Hese Words are the Conclusion of that admirable Discourse with which our Blessed Saviour entertained his Disciples, when he took his solemn Leave of them, immediately before his Sufferings. And therein we read so much Wisdom and Goodness, such Care and Concernment for his poor Disciples, to support their Spirits when he was gone from them; as though he had nothing to do but to comfort them, when his own Agony was so near. For he had no sooner ended his Divine Prayer, *Chap. 17.* but he went with his Disciples into the Garden, where he pray'd thrice with great Earnestness to be delivered *from that Cup he was to drink of;* (but with great submission to the Will of God; *nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt:*) presently after which his Arraignment follow'd. But while he was with his Disciples, such was his Love and Tenderness to them, that he takes little or no notice of his own approaching Sufferings; and applies himself to such Arguments as would tend most to the Comfort of their Minds when he should be taken from them. For while he was with them, they pleas'd themselves with the thoughts that he would take care of them; and they still found that one way or other he still provided for their Safety. But what should they do when all their Support was gone? When *the good Shepherd should be smitten,* and the poor Flock left among ravening Wolves? Yet, in the Verse before, our Saviour tells them, *Behold the hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone;* i. e. The Confusion and Disorder of their Minds would be so great on the sudden and unexpected Consterna-



Consternation which fell upon them at our Saviour's Arraignment; that they would both forget him and themselves too. But in the midst of all the Troubles that should befall them, he tells them, that he had left them those Instructions, he had given them such an Example, he had provided such a Recompence for them, as would afford them the best and surest Foundation for a constant Peace and Tranquillity of Mind: which is implied in the Words of the Text, *These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have Peace, &c.*

Here are two Things to be enquired into,

1. How far these Things are consistent with each other; *That in me ye might have Peace, and in the world ye shall have Tribulation.*

2. What is implied in this Peace here promised, and in the means here mention'd for attaining it.

1. Here are things seemingly inconsistent put together: for, Peace is a very comprehensive Word, and takes in every thing that is easie and desirable to Mankind as to their Condition in this World. Peace and Prosperity are often joined together: *Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.* But how comes Peace and Tribulation to be here put together? If they were both meant as to external things, it were not possible to join them: but our Saviour doth suppose it possible to have inward and spiritual Peace in the midst of the Calamities and Troubles which this Life is subject to. And of this he had spoken to them before; *Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* What is the meaning of this? Is the Trouble and Discomposure of our Minds so sad a thing that our Blessed Saviour just before his own Sufferings should take so much care to prevent it? Yet he begins and ends his last solemn Discourse with his Disciples about it: *Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me, &c.* What makes him so concerned to prevent their inward Trouble and Disquiet, unless this were look'd on as the greatest Blessing he could leave them? He never promises that they should be free from outward Troubles; nay, he tells them that they must expect them: *In the world ye shall have Tribulation.* As though he had said to them; make account to meet with Crosses and Afflictions of all sorts, for I never promised that you should be freed from them as long as ye are in this troublesome World; and therefore do not think that I have deceived you with flattering Hopes, or raised your Expectations as to an easie and prosperous Condition in this World. Remember when I first made choice of you, I told you, *I sent you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves;* and can such expect to live at ease? I have told you, that *Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places;* but I never told you that none of my Disciples shall bear a share in such common Calamities: but, on the contrary, that *they shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all men for my names sake; and then many shall be offended, and shall betray one another, and hate one another.* And in this very Chapter he tells them what ill Usage they must expect from those of the same Nation and outward Profession of Religion with themselves; *They shall put you out of the synagogues, yea the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think he doth God service.* And there can be no more aggravating Circumstance than that, that any should think

to merit Heaven by destroying them. But he bids them take notice that he told them of these things before-hand: *But these things have I told you; that when the time shall come ye may remember that I told you of them.* So careful was he to prevent the least Apprehension that he had deceived them. But wherein then did he, or could he, shew any Kindness to them? Yes, by promising and bestowing something on them, which would make all other things go down far more easily; something that should bear up their Minds and comfort their Spirits, and raise their Expectations above this World. And all this is comprehended in these Words, *That in me ye might have Peace.*

“ But how doth it appear possible for humane Nature to enjoy such  
 “ a Blessing of inward Peace in the midst of all the Troubles of this  
 “ Life? And if the thing it self be not possible, all the promises of it  
 “ are vain and deceitful. But if we consider the common Infirmities  
 “ of Men’s Minds, the Strength and Violence of Passions, the unequal  
 “ Tempers of the best Men, and those sad Dejections of Spirit which ar-  
 “ rise from bodily Distempers, we may be apt to suspect that all such  
 “ Promises are ineffectual, and that all the difference of person’s Beha-  
 “ viour under Sufferings, arises only from a Sense of Decency, a Shame  
 “ of being thought Impatient, or some natural Courage and Sturdiness  
 “ which some Men have above others.

Therefore to clear this Matter, I shall remove the Prejudice by considering, how far Humane Nature is capable of a state of inward Peace and Tranquillity in the midst of all the Troubles and Afflictions of Life.

I. Not so, as to be freed from all kind of Disorder, or inward Passion from the Apprehension of Evils without us which we either do or may undergo: for it is hardly possible for Humane Nature not to startle and be affrighted at the Thoughts of some great Evil befalling us. But if any Evil comes near us, we are too often like that we call the *Sensitive Plant*; for the least touch disorders us, and we are apt to shrink and draw in our Spirits upon the least Assault: but that suffers only by what it feels; but we are so tender, that the least Misapprehension will discompose us. The state of things in this World is so managed by Divine Providence, that we only see the present Events; and cannot tell what will follow, as to our selves or others: But we have quick Apprehensions, and violent Passions; and these make us look upon Evils at a distance as if they were just upon us; and torment our selves as much with the Thoughts of them, as if we felt them. Yet as long as this World is so uncertain, both as to Life, and the Comforts of it, the Passions of our Minds will be representing to us those Evils as present which may be at a great distance; and so we suffer as much by our own Anticipations of Evil as by the Things themselves. I cannot say, as some of old did, that all the Evil of these things we fear here, lies only in the Fancy and Opinion of them; and if our Imaginations were rectified, we should live in perfect Tranquillity: for I do not think it possible to apprehend so much Good in the Enjoyment of some Comforts of Life, and not to apprehend an equal degree of Evil in the loss of them. If Life, and Health, and Ease, and Friends, and near Relations, be things we value; how is it possible, but it must be thought a very uneasy thing to be deprived of them? Either therefore we must apprehend nothing to be Good, or we must look on something to be Evil, which is opposite to that Good; and if it be look’d on as Evil, our  
 Passions

Passions will be moved according to that Apprehension we have of it: and as we love, and desire, and hope for what we apprehend to be good, so we must abhor, and shun, and fear any thing we do apprehend to be contrary to it. So that I cannot but look on an Indifferency of Mind, as to the good or evil Things of this Life, as a meer Romantick Fancy of such who would be thought to be much wiser than they ever were, or could be. It is as if we should fancy square Bodies and round to have the same Dimensions, and therefore equally capable of a volubility of Motion. If there be an Agreeableness in some things to please us in the Enjoyment, there must be a Disagreeableness in parting with them; and the Grief in one must like the Vibrations of a Pendulum, be answerable to the Joy and Transport of the other. If God hath so framed us, that our Passions of Joy and Delight unite us to the things we love, it cannot otherwise be, but we must be afflicted and troubled when those things are taken away from us. The Instincts of Nature shew this in inferiour Creatures, which are strong and vehement till Time abates them, when their young ones are taken from them. It is true God hath given us reason to moderate and rule our Passions, but not to root them out: what is Natural is Reasonable, but what is extravagant and beyond bounds ought to be retrenched; and it is a fault not to do it. My meaning is, that it is not inconsistent with that Peace and Tranquillity which ought to be in the Minds of good Men, to have our natural Passions stirred with the Apprehensions of Good and Evil as to our Condition in this World: but when we let them go beyond their bounds, and suffer our Passions to over-rule us, when they lead us to Impatience and Discontent, when they hinder us from doing our Duty, then we break our Rule, and offend God, and act inconsistently with the Peace and Tranquillity of our Minds.

2. Not so, as to be always in an equal Temper of Freedom and Cheerfulness: for this is out of our Power. We cannot command the raging of the Sea, nor still the Waves thereof; we cannot allay the stormy Wind and Tempest, but must yeild to the Force and Violence of it: And it is not much otherwise within our selves; The Distempers of our Blood, and the Disorders of our Bodies, are not under the check and controul of our Minds; if they were, we might all be *Physicians* enough to *heal our selves*: and we may as well cure the Ague and Fever with our Reason and Authority, as the Disorders of an ill Habit of Body, or meer melancholy Vapours. I do not deny, but a great deal may be done to the abating and diverting the Effects such things have upon the Mind; but it is a very hard thing to keep up an even Temper of Mind under a very uneasie Temper of Body: for, do what we can, bodily Distempers will too much disorder our Minds and discompose our Thoughts. We can neither think freely, nor judge impartially, nor behave our selves with that evenness of Temper which we might do at another time. But yet there is great difference between a Tranquillity that arises from Health, and Ease, and good Circumstances in the World, and that which comes from the Mind it self, and a just and due Consideration of our selves with respect to God and another World. We must keep in our Minds the different Affections of the Soul and Body, and the Influence they have upon each other, so as not to mistake a natural Cheerfulness for Tranquillity of Mind; nor the Effects of an ill Habit of Body for the want of it: for, if we could suppose

pose a pure Angelical Mind to be united to a Body full of Disorders, oppressed with Melancholly, and heated with the unruly Motions of a disturbed Imagination; could we conceive that it would have the same freedom and serenity that it had before? And if not such a Mind, how much less such as ours are, which have been so tainted with Corruption, and so long under the strong Impressions which arise from our Senses? A perfect freedom of our Minds cannot be expected then in this gloomy uncertain state we are in here; but yet there is a very great difference between the comfortable Reflections of a good Conscience, and the anguish and disquiet of a bad one. But here lies the difficulty, how Conscience shall be able to make a true Judgment upon it self, when it wants a true Light to judge by; and every thing is represented according to the black and dismal apprehension of things, which thro' the power of some natural Distemper the Person then labours under. We find in *Hezekiah* the Comfort of a good Conscience, when he  
 Isa. 38. 3. said, *Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which was good in thy sight.* But yet we find under his Sickness he owns the great Inequality of his Temper, when he said, *O Lord I am oppressed, undertake for me.* Which plainly  
 Isa. 38. 14. shews, that a great Oppression of Mind by reason of bodily Infirmities, is very consistent with the Peace and Comfort of a good Conscience, when it can with freedom reflect upon it self.

3. Not so, as to be free from a deep Sense and Sorrow for our Sins. There are two very different Schemes of Peace and Tranquillity of Mind; the one goes upon the Supposition, that it is in our own Power to keep our Passions in order, and that if we act and judge according to Nature and Reason, we shall never be disturbed about the Evils of Life. But there are two notorious Flaws in this Way: 1. That we have such a Power over our Passions to command them as we please. I do not deny but, by the Grace of God, we may govern them as to the Measure and Effects of them; but, that we can wholly subdue them, and that by our own Power, is a vain and groundless Assertion, and contrary to the Experience of the best and wisest Men of all Ages. 2. That we are not to look back on what we have done, but only to take care for the future. So that according to this Scheme, Repentance and Sorrow for Sin is an impertinent disquieting our selves with what we cannot help; but we ought to look better to our selves for the time to come. But this is not the Scheme which Christianity proposes; for that requires these things.

1. That we ought to be deeply affected with the Sense of our Sins against God in the past course of our Lives. For God expects it from us, as an Acknowledgment of the Justice of his Laws, and of our Folly in disobeying them, and without which there will be no such effectual Resolution of Amendment as we ought to have; other Considerations being too weak to change the bent of our Minds and the course of our Actions.

2. That upon our true Repentance God will forgive what is past, and accept our sincere Endeavours for the future. And without this there can be no Peace of Mind upon the Terms of the Gospel. But here lies the main Difficulty, how to be satisfied of the Truth of our Repentance and the Sincerity of our Endeavours; for since our Passions are not rooted out, there may be Stirrings in them; and since there are so many Failings in our Endeavours, how can we be satisfied  
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of their Sincerity? And unless we be so, what Peace of Mind can we have?

I answer, That without breaking off a former Course of Sin, there can be none; and it ought not to be expected; because it is against the very Articles of Peace contained in the Gospel: but if any have been guilty of great and habitual Sins, and have broken off from the practice of them, with great Abhorrence and Destation of them, and a Resolution to return no more to them, there may be a foundation for true Peace of Mind to them, because they are within the fundamental Terms of the Gospel, which are, *That Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preached in the name of Christ to all Nations.* For the joining of these together is the great Foundation on which our Peace with God depends, and consequently the Peace of our own Minds. Luke 24. 47.

But how can those have Peace whose Sins return upon them, whenever they reflect on themselves; and they are certain they have sinned, and that grievously, but they are not so certain that they have repented; and then what a sad Condition are they in?

To this I answer, That although we cannot come to that assurance of the Sincerity of our Repentance that we have of our Sins, yet we may have sufficient ground for the Peace of our Minds.

1. If our Repentance hath been remarkable by a general Change of our Lives, as well as with respect to those particular Sins.

2. If we have had a just Trial of our selves, by resisting the same Temptations which did overcome us before; and that not in a sudden heat, but with a firm and settled purpose of Mind.

3. If we have been as careful to do Good as to avoid Evil, that is a true Sign that our Repentance hath had its genuine Effect upon us.

Of which we have a remarkable Instance in *St. Peter*, who fell grievously after this Promise; and Christ himself foretells it, immediately before this Discourse. What became of this Promise of Peace now to him? Could he expect it, before he heartily repented? *St. Matthew* tells us, *He went out, and wept bitterly*: and so *St. Luke*. But did not *Judas* repent too, and owned Christ's Innocency, in those words, *I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood*? Where then lay the Difference? The one in the horror of his Soul sunk into Despair, and made a sad End of himself; the other returned to his Duty, and shew'd the truth of his Repentance by the Zeal to the Service of Christ, which he made appear to the end of his Life. So that those who fall may recover the Peace of their Minds, but not without great Demonstrations of the Sincerity of their Repentance. John 13. 38.  
Matt. 26. 75.  
Luke 22. 62.  
Mat. 27. 4.

II. But what is implied in this Peace which our Saviour promises, and the Means here mention'd for attaining it?

There are three Things contained in it.

1. Peace with God; *That in me ye might have Peace.*
2. Patience under Afflictions; *for in the World ye shall have Tribulation.*
3. The Hopes of a better World; for to that end our Saviour adds, *be of good cheer, I have overcome the World.*

“As though he had said to them, be not discouraged with the Fears of what may befall you in this World; I know the utmost it can do to you; but I have laid such a Foundation for the Peace of your Minds towards God, for your bearing the Troubles of Life, for your  
“ looking

“ looking for a far better State in another World; that upon the whole matter, you have reason to be cheerful under all.

I. The first thing is *Peace with God*. And that ought to be the first thing as to the Peace of our own Minds; for there can be no true Peace without Consideration; (for then it is meer Stupidity :) and where there is Consideration, the first care must be to have Peace with God; because it is impossible for any one that considers, to have Peace in his Mind, while he hath cause to look on God as angry or displeas'd with him. For if we consider him, we must consider his infinite Perfections, his Holiness, Justice, and Power; and how is it possible for that Man to have any Peace in his Mind, who hath so much reason to conclude such a Being his greatest Enemy, on whom he depends for his own Being; and at whose Mercy he is every Moment? The generality of Mankind hath been always apprehensive of God's Displeasure, and that was the reason they took so much care about Sacrifices and Oblations, hoping that God would thereby be attoned, and his Displeasure be removed from them. But all their Sacrifices were sufficient to shew the Sense of their Guilt; but not to make any Expiation for it: For it shew'd that they were sensible that they had displeas'd God, and would be very glad to find out some means of Atonement, but they were extremely to seek for the way of doing it; and by their foolish and absurd ways of Propitiation, did but encrease his Displeasure. What then should Mankind do with respect to God? They might lament their Condition, and implore his Mercy, and beg of him to shew the way how he might be reconcil'd to them.

But what Reason could they have to hope that the offended Majesty of Heaven should himself find out and offer the way of being reconcil'd to himself? But therein lies the infinite Advantage we have by Christianity; that thereby God hath made known to us the only certain way of being at Peace with him, by the Mediation of his Son Christ Jesus, *who became sin for us, who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*. This is the Foundation of that Doctrine of Reconciliation which is now preached by the Gospel. Now then we are *Embassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconcil'd to God*. O happy Embassy for Mankind! But is it credible, that a just, holy, offended God, should stoop so low to woo and beseech his own Creatures, who are become his Enemies, to be reconcil'd to him? When Mankind hardly thought it possible that he should ever be reconcil'd to them after all their chargeable and toilsome ways of Propitiating him; and the utmost Inventions of Mankind to that purpose. What now shall we say to the Offers of Reconciliation made by the Gospel? Were the Apostles all wonderfully deceived in this matter, or did they go about to deceive the World? There must be something extraordinary in this Case: Either the World must be deceived after a new Method by a Company of harmless, innocent, and most resolv'd Persons; or else there must be a Discovery made of such a Design for the Benefit of Mankind, as to their Peace with God, as was never thought of by the wisest Men in the World. They had been long considering how necessary it was to find out some method for doing it: they were convinc'd there must be something beyond meer *Repentance* and *Prayers*, and common *Oblations*; which could not satisfy the inquisitive Men among themselves: and therefore they had a great Opinion of some *mysterious Rites* which had

had been long since found out and kept up as mighty Secrets from the generality of Mankind. But these were such absurd things, that the only decent thing concerning them, was the keeping them so secret as they did. Yet, the Apostle took an occasion even from thence to commend Christianity when he said, *Without controversse great is the mystery of Godliness. God manifest in the flesh, &c.* A Mystery no doubt it is, and a very great one, for *God to be manifested in the flesh*; but is it not too great to be believed? No, saith the Apostle; the *Divine Spirit* and the *Holy Angels*, have given their Testimony to it; and even the most open Enemies to it have received it; *preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the World*: but besides all the other Evidence, Christ's Ascension into Heaven after his Resurrection from the Dead, confirms the Truth of this Mystery. But might not the Apostles themselves be deceived in making such a Mystery of this matter? There might be an extraordinary and divine Person among them, who taught them excellent Doctrines; but why *God manifest in the flesh*? Even because he pleased; and such was his Love to Mankind, to stoop to all this Condescension to us, that he might bring us nearer to God.

There is no other Account to be given of infinite Love, but that it is infinite Love. If there were any thing on our side to deserve it, it would not be so. *Herein is love*, saith the Apostle, *not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.* This is infinite Love indeed, not only to offer a Propitiation himself, but to send his Son for that purpose to make our Peace with him.

But was he not at Peace with Mankind, when he had so much Love as to send his Son for a Propitiation?

This shews that he was not an Implacable Being, but that he was upon terms of Mercy, and willing to be reconciled. But a settled standing Peace for Mankind required more than bare Offers of a Propitiation. It shew'd him willing to do all that was consistent with his Justice and Honour. If no more were required on God's part but his Willingness to be reconciled, why did he send his Son at all? For he might have had many ways of doing that, without exposing him to all that Contempt, and Ignominy, and cruel Suffering on the Cross, which he underwent. It is commonly said, that those who believe no God, are more reasonable than those who believe him, but live as if there were none: And it's true, that although they believe no God at all, they do not act so absurdly, although their Principle be more unreasonable. But in this case, I think that those who reject the Doctrine of the Gospel are not more unreasonable (although very much so) than those who make God to send his Son only for the doing of that which might have been sufficiently done without him: His coming, they grant, was extraordinary, and his Circumstances in the World, and his manner of Suffering; but God, we are sure, doth no extraordinary thing but for extraordinary Reasons; but if there were nothing in the Undertaking of Christ, but what might have been done by another, there was no peculiar Reason to himself in it, and consequently no sufficient ground for his more than ordinary Suffering. But this is contrary to what Christ and his Apostles affirmed: Christ said, but very little before his own Suffering; *This is my blood of the New Testament which was shed for many for the remission of sins.* What can the plain meaning of this be, but that Christ was by his Blood to confirm

a new Covenant, in order to our Peace with God? For, the *Remission of Sins* must suppose what St. Paul saith, *God spared not his own Son, but deliver'd him up for us all.* How was that? He tells us in another place, *God commendeth his Love towards us, in that while we were yet Sinners Christ died for us:* and afterwards, *If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.* Therefore the *blood of Christ* must be the Means of our Reconciliation to God. From whence it appears plainly, that something more was required in order to our Peace with God, besides that Love which was shew'd in sending him into the World.

Here then we may safely rest our selves, as to the Foundation of our Peace with God, viz. *That God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing unto men their Trespases. i. e.* He is willing to forgive their Sins, if they be willing to be reconciled to him; for that is required. Are not all Persons willing to have their Sins forgiven? No doubt of it. But being *reconciled to God* implies a great deal more than to be willing to be forgiven. We must lay aside our Love of Sin, without which there can be no hopes of it. And is this an easie matter? Especially to one that hath habituated himself to the practice of it; and to whom it is become such a necessary Ingredient of the pleasure of Life, that he knows not how to live without it. But if this be not done, *There is no peace, saith God, to the wicked.* They can have no Peace in their own Minds; for they are *like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt:* and they are sure to have no Peace with God; for, *the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth.* So that the terms of our Peace with God, are the renouncing of all Interests contrary to his; loving what he loves, hating what he hates; and then we may comfort our selves with the hopes of having made our Peace with God: which wilful and presumptuous Sinners have no manner of Title to, as long as they continue such; but the humble, and contrite, and penitent Sinner, may comfort himself with the hopes of the Favour and Mercy of God towards him, although he be very sensible how little he hath deserved it; but he so much more values and esteems the infinite Mercy and Goodness of God in it.

But if this Promise of Peace with God belongs to humble and penitent Sinners, how come they to be so often without it, and so much dejected under the sense of their Sins?

I must set aside the case of Melancholy, and other natural Infirmities, which even the best are subject to here, and have been consider'd already; and then we may give an Answer in these Particulars.

1. Penitent Sinners may want Peace through Mistakes and Misapprehensions of God: for when there is a deep sense of Sin, it is no easie matter to keep up the sense of God's Readiness to forgive. The Mind then poring upon its own Guilt, and looking so long upon it, till the Sense of God's Goodness be worn off, and black and dismal Apprehensions of his Wrath and Severity come in the place of it. And till this be rectified, and the Mind settled in a true sense of the Mercy of God in the Gospel, there can be no fixed and settled Peace. For nothing can keep it up without a right Apprehension of the whole Design of the Gospel, which signifies far more than particular Promises; which relate to different Circumstances and Occasions.

2. Through too great Mistrust of themselves. Every penitent Sinner goes to the bottom in the search of his Sins; and when he hath examin'd



examined himself with that Strictness and Care that he ought to use, he then is apt to think, that he can never Repent enough, nor have so much Abhorrence and Detestation as his Sins have deserved: And if they mistrust that they fail in this fundamental Duty, can it be wonder'd if they want the Comfort of it? Whereas those who never Repented, but slightly and superficially, are far more easily satisfied with their own Performance. Like a confident Dunce at School, that is highly pleased with mean Performances of his own; but a true modest Scholar, who knows better what he is to do, and understands the Critical Niceties of Learning, is hardly satisfied with any thing he doth; because he sees farther, and knows so much more than the other, which makes him more suspicious of any thing he doth, because it doth not come up to that Perfection which he aims at. Were it not for this, one would wonder at the confident Presumption of some great impenitent Sinners, and the frequent Dejections of the most humble Penitents. With some, a little Repentance goes a great way, as a little Charity doth with a covetous Person, and a very little Humility with a proud Man; for they set a great rate upon any thing contrary to their Temper: but one that thinks he can never do enough in Repentance, cannot easily be satisfied with what he doth; and while he is thus unsatisfied with himself, no wonder if he wants Peace in his own Mind.

3. Casual Relapses into former Sins. I say *Casual*, because if designed, they are inconsistent with true Repentance; and the whole Work must be done over again. But where there have been former Weaknesses, although the Heart be changed, yet there may be sudden and violent Assaults, and not so firm a Resistance at first. But as soon as the Mind returns to it self; it is not to be expressed with what severe Lashes it chastises it self for such unspeakable Folly: And then it calls in question the Truth of its former Repentance, and is apt to make dreadful Conclusions against it self. And it is hardly possible to recover such a one to any Peace of Mind, till he hath recovered himself by fresh and serious Acts of Repentance. For so much Satisfaction as there is of true Repentance, so much there is of true Peace to be expected, and no more.

II. Patience under Afflictions is implied in the Peace here spoken of. *For in the world ye shall have Tribulation*; and where that is, there must be Patience, or there can be no Peace. I shall not run out into a general Discourse of Patience, but I shall confine my self to those particular Arguments for it which Christ hath given us, and shew how much they contribute to the Peace of our Minds, with respect to the Afflictions we may meet with here.

And the main Arguments are comprehended under these two.

1. The Wisdom of Providence.

2. The Wisdom of Resignation and Submission to God's Will.

1. The Wisdom of Divine Providence. That is certainly the best Argument which gives the greatest Satisfaction to ones Mind; that it is a just and reasonable thing for us to be patient under the Calamities which befall us. There are many Arguments that will shew that it is to no purpose to resist, or murmur at things we cannot help; but all this while the Mind is unsatisfied with the Necessity of Causes, and Fatality of Events, and the common Accidents of Life, and the Multitude of Fellow-Sufferers, &c. all which are Arguments to stop ones Mouth rather

ther than to satisfie ones Mind. But, if I be convinced that there is a great and wise God that governs the World, and orders all things for the best; that nothing happens but what he hath appointed, and he hath great and wise Ends in all that he doth, (however we may not be able to reach them;) this gives me clear Satisfaction, that I have reason to be contented with what he doth. A Man that is in Slavery may submit to the Will of his Master because he cannot help it; and that it is to no purpose to fret at his Chains and Fetters, which will but gall him the more: But this is a very different thing from the Submission of a Child to the Will of his Father, it is possible he may do many things to him which go down uneasily; but he remembers it is his Father which doth them; and he is certain he hath no ill design upon him in what he doth, and he knows better what is good for him than he doth for himself; and therefore he hath great reason to be disposed and governed by him.

This is the Representation which Christ makes of the Providence of God with respect to good Men. He plainly asserts, That God doth interpose so far in the Affairs of Mankind, that nothing falls out but by his Appointment; that he knows our Wants, considers our Condition, and allots such things to us, as he judges convenient for us; and therefore he would not have us torment our selves with solicitous thoughts about the Affairs of this World, but leave them to his wise Providence; and it will be enough to think of evil things when they come upon us; *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

Matth. 10.  
29, 30.  
6. 30, &c.

But suppose we are not to disquiet our selves before-hand with the Fears of what may not come; yet when we find that they are come, and that God deals severely with us, how can we then bear up under his afflicting Hand? Have we not more cause to be troubled, that a Father should be displeas'd at us? Have we not reason to reflect on our Sins which have made him so angry with us?

To give a satisfactory Answer to this, we must consider these things;

1. That none have reason to expect that God should alter the common methods of his Providence for their sakes. For, he hath established a Course and Order of things in the World, upon wise and great Ends, which none have cause to complain of. Thus as to the period of Human Life, he hath altered it from what it was at first; for it would be a very impertinent thing to quarrel now, that Men do not live to the Age of the Patriarchs; and as little cause is there to complain, that all Men do not hold out to what *Moses* called the Age of a Man; for God never promised that any should live so long; some may hold out beyond this, but they are few in comparison of those who fall short of it; and God is just and wise in all this. Sometimes he shortens Mens Lives for their own sakes, and sometimes for the sake of others; sometimes he prolongs Life beyond Human Expectation; and sometimes he takes them away in the Flower of their Years; and the secret of these things is hid from us, but we are certain God doth nothing without the greatest Reason, and that it ought to satisfie our Enquiry about these things.

2. It is a very unreasonable thing to suppose, that ordinary Events of Providence are extraordinary Judgments upon the persons concerned in them. For take away the particular Concernment and all persons judge equally about these matters; Why, say others, should such persons complain of the Hardship of their Condition, is it not the common case

case of Mankind? And why should any hope to be exempted from it? Doth God deal harder with them than with the rest of the World? What thoughts have they of themselves who expect that God should deal with them more favourably than with others as to this World? If they fear him they must expect their Recompence in another World and not in this. And therefore it argues too much weakness of Mind to suspect that God punishes common Infirmities with great Judgments. For, we must lose all our Measures as to God's actions and our own, if we can suppose that he is a peevish, angry Being, and sometimes is more displeas'd with ordinary Infirmities than he commonly is with the greatest Sinners. For these, we daily see, he lets alone and bears with the Affronts they daily put upon him; what then can we think of the Divine Majesty, if he should take pet at others who design to serve him, and for any little neglect or mistake of theirs should presently resolve to punish them in the severest manner. But these are thoughts unbecoming of God and the Wisdom of his Providence, and therefore we ought to settle our Minds in a firm belief of that, before we conclude any thing concerning our own Circumstances.

3. It becomes us all, when any thing befalls us that is very uneasie to us, to humble our selves under the Hand of God. That is, to be sensible of our own Weakness and Folly, and our Desert of much more than God hath laid upon us; and the more we think of that, the more meek, and quiet, and patient we shall be under his Hand; for, as often as we think we have deserved much more, we have cause to be thankful, that God hath punished us so much less than our Iniquities have deserved: And therefore even our Sins are an Argument for our Patience and Contentment in our present condition.

II. The second Argument for Patience in the Gospel, is from the Wisdom of Submission and Resignation to God's Will; and that not merely with respect to the Wisdom of Providence, but to our own Condition.

1. Patience is the best Remedy we have within our reach: I do not mean, that we can have as much of it as we please; for it is nothing short of the Grace of God which can keep our Minds in due temper under Afflictions, but that Patience is easier obtained and more useful to us than any other Remedy under the unavoidable Evils of Human Life. When our Saviour foretold to his Disciples what a dreadful state of things was coming upon them, all the Comfort he gave them was, *Keep your Patience possess ye your Souls.* What! when he had said just before, *that they should be hated of all men for his name sake, and that they should* <sup>Luk 21.</sup> *be betrayed by friends and nearest relations and some of them be put to* <sup>19.</sup> *death?* How could such Men *possess their Souls in patience,* when they <sup>16, 17.</sup> thought what ill usage they should meet with from the World? But when we cannot alter other Men's Minds concerning us, our best way is to govern our own. We may be ill used, and we cannot help it; but that ill usage signifies more or less to us according to the measure of our Patience; so that it is in our power in a great measure to set Bounds to the Malice of our greatest Enemies; for it can have no greater effect upon our Minds than we give way to our selves. Our Patience will either remove the Evil or make it easier, and we have reason since we cannot alter things to make them as easie to us as we can.

2. Patience is the best ending of all our strugglings: This we find in our Blessed Saviour himself, who was not without a great sense of his approaching

Matth. 26. 39. approaching Sufferings when he prayed in the Garden, *O my Father, if it be possible let this Cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt*: Hereby we see that the highest Example of Patience doth not make it to consist in an affected Insensibility of Pain; when we find our Saviour had at that time a sense of it to a high degree; but in  
 v. 42. that admirable Submission to the Will of God, *nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt*. And again he said, *O my Father, if this Cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done*. He was deeply sensible of the Passions of Human Nature; and he shews how much innocent nature may struggle in the best; but there lies the excellency of *Christian Patience*, when it subdues these Reluctancies, and brings the Mind to a quiet Submission to the Will of God. *The Cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?* This he said upon his first Arraignment; but although he had thus resigned himself to God's Will, yet Nature was still struggling within him; but he still overcame it, and that was true Patience. His case was extraordinary and therefore he prayed so earnestly; but in our Condition he allows us to pray too, and doth not forbid a natural sense of Troubles, but we must conclude as he did; *Not as I will, but as thou wilt*. We know it is a vain thing to struggle with the Almighty, but it is not an easie thing to submit to his Will out of choice and with inward satisfaction.

3. Patience is the peculiar Character of the best Christians. It was that which amazed and confounded the Heathen World, to see poor illiterate persons not acquainted with Philosophy, or Athletick Hardships to bear the greatest Pains and Torments with an invincible Spirit and heroick Patience. But this was the then common effect of extraordinary Trials, that their Patience did appear the more remarkable. *Knowing*, saith St. Paul, *that tribulation worketh patience*. One would have thought that it would have worked rather Murmuring and Discontent and a hatred of Religion, which brought so much trouble upon them; but on the other side it made them more humble and submissive, more  
 Rom. 5. 3. willing to please God than Men. *Knowing*, saith St. James, *that the trying of your faith worketh patience*.

Yes, may some say, the trying of our *faith may work patience*, because that is an extraordinary case, and God will not be wanting then to support and comfort the Spirits of those who are called out to such remarkable Trials; but what is this to the common Calamities of Mankind; what ground is there for Patience under them, and what hopes of Divine Assistance?

1. Where ever it is the Will of God we must suffer, and in what he judges fittest for us, we have the same Arguments and Reason for Patience and Submission. This is just as if a Child should argue thus, If my Father would put me upon some very hard service to do for him, he should find how obedient I would be to him; but if in the ordinary course of his Family, I be fretful and cross to him; if I complain of his management, and think much of every thing he puts upon me, would this be becoming a dutiful and obedient Son? If God tries us in lesser things, certainly we ought rather to submit to him, for he knows how unable we are to bear greater Trials, and therefore we ought to be more thankful to him.

2. We have no reason to question God's Assistance in lesser Trials, if we sincerely pray to him for it. God is always ready to give according to our Necessities, for he knows our Wants and considers our Infirmities; and

and he hath not limited his giving or our asking to extraordinary Cases, but to such things which are proper for us to ask and for him to give: And no one can deny, but we want a great deal of Patience to go through the Pains, and Infirmities, and Troubles of Life; and if we do pray heartily to God to bear up our Minds and to carry us through the Evils of this World with Patience and Submission, we have no reason to question the Goodness of God, who is never wanting to those that ask what is fit for him to give and for them to receive.

3. Impatience is so much greater a Fault, if our Case be only what is common and ordinary. I am afraid, there are too many who pretend to great things in Religion, who never took that care they ought to do, to govern their Minds in lesser matters, but are fretful and impatient, and discontented upon slight and trivial Occasions. Such a Temper is a burden to it self, as well as to others. They need no Tribulation to be sent them, for they make enough to themselves: But it is a vain thing to hope that they shall ever bear great things who cannot bear the smallest Crosses without inward fretting and impatience. Common Discretion and Consideration would do much to allay this sort of Impatience if they would make use of it; and if they will not, it shews both the weakness and wilfulness of their Tempers.

III. The last thing implied in this Peace, is, the Hopes of a better World. For nothing but this can give any ground of Cheerfulness under Trouble: And that is here required; *Be of good cheer, I have overcome the World.* The Sense whereof we are to take from our Saviour's former Expressions: *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the World; again I leave the World and go to the Father.* The meaning then is, All the Spite and Malice of the World can do me no hurt, but only hasten my passage to a better World; and as I thus overcome the World by Suffering, so will all those who follow my Example and hearken to my Doctrine. *In my Father's House are many Mansions: I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto my self, that where I am there ye may be also.* This is the Foundation of the Courage and Joy of Christians, that Christ hath overcome the World himself, and will help his Followers to overcome it; and then bring them into a State of endless Felicity with himself in Heaven. Verf. 28.

Here is a threefold Foundation for Peace and Comfort to all that follow Christ's Example. 14. 2, 3.

I. That Christ himself hath overcome the World. For, if he had failed, all our Hopes had been lost with him. The World seemed to have much the better and to triumph over him, when he was crucified, and his Body taken down, and safely buried, as they thought, without possibility of its being taken out of the Grave, when the Mouth of the Sepulchre was stopp'd with a great Stone, which was sealed and a Watch set about it; so that there could be no removing the Body, without Noise and Disturbance that way, and the Rockiness of the Soil hinder'd it any other. But what Joy and Satisfaction was it to the disconsolate Disciples to find their Lord to have overcome Death and the Grave, and all the Malice of his Enemies by his Resurrection from the Dead? Our Saviour had told them how much their Condition would be altered upon it. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the World shall rejoyce; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned* Matth. 27  
65. Verf. 20.

Verf. 22. *turned into joy. And ye now therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoyce, and your joy no man taketh from you.* This is Joy indeed, which cannot be taken away. Other Joys are soon spent and easily removed; but this is out of the reach of Malice and Envy, which is founded on the mighty Power and Goodness of God in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ: For thereby we are assured of a State of Bliss and Immortality, and we may safely look beyond the Grave, when the Son of God hath overcome Death it self. *O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?* Death and the Grave had utterly overcome Mankind, and there was no resisting the force of them; but by the Resurrection of Christ the Sting is taken out and the Gates to Death are set open, so that now there is a Passage from Death to Life, and from a State of Weakness and Corruption to a State of Glory and Immortality, which can never suffer by Tribulation or Infirmities, or the Disorder and Mutability of this State: *Therefore be of good cheer, I have overcome the World.*

1 Cor. 15.  
55.

2. That Christ having overcome the World, will assist his People in the Conquest of it. We have cause enough for Despondency, when we consider our own Weakness and Folly; how easily we are overcome by the Temptations of the World; how hardly we master any of our Passions with regard to it; but are we then to give over all, and to sink into Despair? God forbid. Is our Faith vain? Have we no hopes of a better State? Yes, but how shall we come at it? How can we that are continually foiled hope to overcome? But have we done all we can towards it? Have we endeavoured to mortifie our Passions? if not, why do we complain that we cannot do what we never in earnest attempted to do? But after all, hath not God promised to assist us with his Grace, through which we may be enabled to do what we cannot of our selves? And have we prayed to God for his Grace, as those who depend upon it and can do nothing without it? Have we improved all the Measures of Grace which he hath given us? Who can say that he hath? But yet God is merciful and ready to help us if we are sincere; and if we are not, there is no reason to expect it.

3. That having once overcome the World, we need fear no more. For, on the other side the Grave, there is no Danger, no Temptation, no Snares or Difficulties to be overcome. There is nothing then but a state of uninterrupted Peace and Tranquillity; fulness of Joy; and Pleasures for evermore.

I shall only add some things by way of Inference.

1. Not to expect too much from this World, which is always vain and deceitful, and never answers the Hopes and Expectations of Mankind. It is a great part of true Wisdom to know the World betimes; for then we cannot be much deceived by it: But this is a part of Wisdom which few do attain to, till they have smarted for it; and Age and Experience hath made them find at last, what they thought before came from Envy, or Ignorance, or Disappointments. The Condition of Mankind would be much easier in the World, if they did not flatter themselves too much with meeting with better success in it than others have had before them. If you make account of Trouble in the World, you will be less surprized when it doth come; and account it clear gains when it doth not. Endeavour always to preserve as great an Indifferency as you can as to your Condition here; never hope to have it perfect, but lessen the Apprehension of Troubles what you can, although you do expect

expect them; lay things in the Balance one against another, and you will find the greatest Advantage any can have in this World above others is in the Temper and Disposition of their Minds: And therefore a patient, quiet and contented Spirit is the greatest Blessing of this Life.

2. Not to be dejected when Troubles do come upon us: For this is very unsuitable to our Profession, and Hopes, and the blessed Examples of all those who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promises. Patience is that which is most necessary for us in every condition of Life; *For we have need of patience, saith the Apostle, that after we have done the will of God we may receive the promise.* What the Will of God may be concerning us, we know not; but we know that it is our duty to submit to it whatsoever it be; but it is such, as makes Patience necessary for us. Some think that Life it self is an Exercise of Patience, but we are sure the Companions of Life require it; even in our best condition there will be trials of Patience.

3. *Lastly*, To raise our Minds above this World, where we are to expect nothing but Trials, and to prepare them for a better World, whither Christ is gone to prepare a place for us, if we prepare our Minds for it. If we want the comfortable Hopes of another World, we must want our chiefest Support in this: And the only way to look with Comfort on another World, is to be sure to make our Peace with God in this, by a sincere Repentance, a steady and chearful Obedience to the Will of God; a constant Resolution to do good, and a firm Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the true and only way to Eternal Life: For so he saith here, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.*

H h h h

S E R-

# SERMON XXXIX.

O F

## Spiritual Worship.

JOHN IV. 24.

*God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in Truth.*

**T**Hese words are part of an unusual Conference between Christ and the Woman of *Samaria*. They met at a place called *Jacob's Well*, v. 6. and he asked an ordinary Kindness of her, *to give him some of the Water to drink*, v. 7. but she knowing him to be a *Jew*, was surpris'd at it, v. 9. for the Heats and Animosities at that time between the *Jews* and *Samaritans* were so great, that they would not afford common Civilities to each other: But upon farther discourse she finds him to be a more than ordinary Person, v. 19. *The woman said unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a Prophet*, and therefore resolves to know his Opinion in the main point of Difference between the *Jews* and *Samaritans* as to the place of Levitical Worship, v. 20. Our Saviour tells her the time of this Dispute was now at an end, v. 21. and although the *Jews* had the Advantage as to the means of Salvation, v. 22. yet *the hour was now come* when all that Legal and Typical Service should be laid aside, and the Solemn Worship of God not be tied to one particular place, either at *Jerusalem* or *Mount Garizim*; but the Worship of God should be such as was most agreeable to his own Nature, which is not confined to any one place. For *God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

Here are two things necessary to be spoken to ;

- I. What our Saviour aimed at in these words.
- II. What Influence they ought to have upon us.

I. What he aimed at in these words to the Woman of *Samaria*; for *God is a Spirit.*

How comes our Saviour to insist upon such a Speculative Point to such a poor Woman as this seems to have been. For nothing seems harder than to form a settled and consistent Notion of a Spiritual Substance to some who pretend to have searched deeper into these matters. But we are to consider that our Saviour's Design lay in these two things.

I. To



1. To rectifie her Misapprehensions of God.
2. To prepare her Mind for a more Spiritual Worship.

1. To rectifie her Misapprehensions of God. It was not so much a Positive Notion of a Spirit, which our Saviour designs, but a Negative one; and that is much easier to our Conceptions; for we may have a distinct Imagination of that which we deny, although we have not of that which we affirm. And this seems to me the most natural account of our Saviour's using this Expression here; *viz.* That the *Samaritans* had so mean and low Conceptions of God, as to apprehend him confined to a certain place and manner of Worship; and therefore he could not be pleased with any kind of Worship but what was offered to him on Mount *Garizim*, and in that manner which the Law of *Moses* prescribed. And this Notion sticks among the poor remainder of the *Samaritans* to this day; for they still offer Sacrifices there and no where else. Now, whence could such an Apprehension arise, but from very low Conceptions of the Divine Nature? For it is nothing but Humour and Fancy to be so taken with one particular place above all others, as to like no Worship but what was performed there. Since there is really nothing in the place it self which could make true Worship more acceptable in one Mountain than another: For Mount *Sion* or Mount *Garizim* made no difference as to that which is the true Worship of God. If they had only insisted that God made choice of one place and not of the other, the thing must have been determined by the Divine Oracles; and the Question would have been whether Mountain was chosen by God himself. But this is not the thing which our Saviour chiefly aimed at, but it was, whether the Worship of God would be acceptable any where else; or any other kind of worship than what was there used. And this Mistake was then common both to *Jews* and *Samaritans*, which had the same Notion of the Manner and Confinement of Worship, but differed in the Place. Now our Saviour uses an Argument which equally reaches to both; and therefore he insists on God's being a *Spirit*; which must therefore be above such mean and low Confinements to one certain place and to such a particular kind of Worship which was appointed by the Law. By his being a *Spirit* is here imply'd, that he is far above all such Properties and Inclinations as are incident to Corporeal Beings; and that is the most necessary part of our Conception of God as a *Spirit*, that he is not such a kind of Being as those we call Bodies are; that is, not under such Confinement to Place, not pleased with the Steams of Sacrifices, nor with the Odours of Incense: For if he were Corporeal, it is impossible he should fill all places with his Presence, or be equally present at the greatest distances; for every Body is made up of several Parts joynd together in one Substance, but so, that every part takes up its proper place and may be separated from the other; which would imply a possibility of Disunion, and consequently, that God may lose a part of himself, which is utterly repugnant to all true Conceptions of God; who is always and must be the same, an Infinite, Eternal, Omnipotent and Omnipresent Being. And if you could suppose him to be without any of these, you may suppose him not to be God: For, he is not so, if he hath not all Perfections in and from himself. *St. Augustin* discoursing on this Subject Aug. 11. 11. Joh. 23. saith, *They have made a good proficiency in the Knowledge of God who think no otherwise of him than he is.* And he thinks the greatest part need go no farther in this matter, than to take away all false and wrong No-

tions of God, as if he were a Body, *Tolle omne corpus*, saith he; be sure you think of God otherwise than ye do of a Bodily Substance.

But if the Notion of Body be so inconsistent with the Divine Nature, how comes the Scripture to favour it so much by representing God, as having the several parts of a Body, as *Hands*, and *Eyes*, and *Ears*, &c. which must lead us to the Conception of him as a Bodily Substance like our selves? I answer,

1. Whosoever believeth the Scripture, must believe that *in the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth*; and therefore must form such a Conception of God, as becomes an Omnipotent Being. And all following Expressions are to be so interpreted, as to agree to this, which is the Foundation of all. It is said indeed in *Genesis 3. 8.* That *Adam and Eve heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the Garden and they hid themselves from the presence of God.* But can we imagine that they had forgotten that God made the World, and that Paradise, wherein they supposed they heard him walking? If they had considered they had not sinned; but having sinned, they were full of Fear and Horrour of God; they considered nothing but their own Shame and Folly, and the force of that Fear made them apprehend God otherwise than they ought to have done. It's true, there was such a Motion, as they apprehended to be from a *Body walking*; but it was only a great Agitation among the Trees by a rushing Wind, which made them run to hide themselves, but God spake to them after the Motion of the Wind, as he did to *Elijah*, who *wrapt his Face in a Mantle* upon it. But this was far from proving that he had a Human Body, since it was impossible he should; and be that God they believed him to be.

1 King. 19.  
11, 21.

2. All the Substance of a Human Shape is never attributed to God, but only those parts which are the proper Instruments of Action, and Life, and Power; and not the dull, heavy, unactive parts; which shews the Design was not to represent God's Nature to us, for then the other parts must have been equally attributed to him: But because we see and perceive things by our Eyes and Ears, therefore his infinite Perception is set forth by them; and because we work with our Hands, therefore the Effects of his Power are called the work of his Hands.

But such Expressions ought not to alter those Apprehensions of God, which are founded on his Nature and Attributes and those other Expressions of Scripture, which make him a Spiritual and Invisible Being; especially, when God himself hath so expressly forbidden any Corporeal Image or Representation of him; of which there can be no good reason if he were a Bodily Substance.

2. Our Saviour aimed not only at the rectifying her Conceptions and raising her Apprehensions of God; but by that means to bring her to a more suitable worship of God. For that seems to have been his chief Design, to take her off from the *Levitical Worship* and to prepare her for the Worship of God more agreeable to his Nature; which he calls *in Spirit and in Truth.*

Here are two material Questions to be resolved;

I. Why, since he was a Spirit, he did ever institute such a kind of Worship?

II. Why, since he did once institute it, doth he now lay it aside, after the coming of Christ?

I. Why

1. Why did he ever institute such a Worship as that was? There were these things considerable in the *Levitical Worship*.

1. It distinguished the *Jews* from the rest of the World, although it complied in the general way of Worship by Sacrifices.

2. It kept them in Dependence upon God, as their Creator and Benefactor.

3. It represented to them better things to come.

1. In the *Levitical Worship* there were two things considerable, a Compliance and a Difference from the rest of the World.

1. A general Compliance with the Customs then obtaining as to the way of Worship; viz. by some External Sacrifices and Oblations: This was so general in the World then, that no Religion was thought to be preserved without it; and it had been practised by the Patriarchs both before and after the Flood; from whom it came down to the *Israelites* in *Egypt*, who desired leave to go into the Wilderness to Sacrifice to the Lord: So that the practice of Sacrificing was conveyed down to them from the Patriarchs; but we are to observe,

Exod. 3. 18.  
5. 3.  
8. 26.

1. That Sacrifices were accepted by God, not for themselves, but from the Temper of Mind they were offered with, which is plain in the Case of *Cain* and *Abel*.

2. That God gave them no Command about Sacrifices when he brought them out of *Egypt*, *Jerem.* 7. 22. But did not *Moses* appoint all the *Levitical* Sacrifices by God's Command?

He did so; and therein God was pleased to humour the People, who were so fond of Sacrifices, especially the *Peace-Offerings*, that the Law would not have gone down without them: But from hence they pleased them so much, that they regarded little more than the Sacrifices; which makes the Prophets so much inveigh against their Hypocrisie in neglecting the great Moral Duties; for they thought their solemn Feasts would make amends for all; but God tells them how very little he regarded all their Sacrifices and Oblations, where there was not a sincere regard to the Will of God in the course of their Lives.

Isai. 1. 11.  
13, 14.  
66. 3.  
Jer. 6. 20.  
Amos 5.

2. There was something peculiar in the *Levitical* Services; which was to put a distinction between them and the rest of the World; not merely as to the Object of their Worship, but as to the Rites and Customs observed among them. And the Reason given by *Moses* of some *Levitical* Precepts was, that God had chosen them a peculiar People to himself. So it was as to the difference of Meats, both there and elsewhere; *Ye shall therefore put a difference between clean Beasts and unclean, &c. and ye shall be holy unto me, for I the Lord am holy, and have severed them from other People, that ye should be mine.* Some have given Natural and some Symbolical Reasons of this Difference; but there is no Reason like that which the Lawgiver himself gives. And this effectually hindred from any free and familiar Conversation at Table, with those of other Nations. And as to Religious Rites, the Reason God himself gives of some of them was, that they should not do after the Customs of *Egypt* and *Canaan*; neither shall ye walk in their Ordinances: Which doth not only extend to Marriages, but as to many *Levitical* Precepts; and most of the things forbidden to the *Jews*; of which there is no evident Reason to be given, it was upon this account that they were the known Practices of the Idolatrous Nations about them. As in the forbidding the use of Honey in all Sacrifices by Fire; whereas nothing

21.  
Micah 6.  
6, 7.  
Deut. 14. 2.  
Levit. 20.  
25, 26.

was

Lev. 18. 3.  
Lev. 2. 11.

was more common in other Nations. So their Customs in Funerals were forbidden, *Lev.* 19. 27, 28. Passing through the Fire for preservation of Children, *Levit.* 18. 21. Seething the Kid in the Mother's Milk, *Deut.* 14. 21. and many others.

2. One great End of the Levitical Worship was to keep them in a due sense of their continual Dependence on God and his Providence. The main Design of the Law was to secure them in the Worship of the true God; and without any unworthy Representations of him. And in order to the maintaining a constant sense of their Dependence upon him most of their solemn Feasts were appointed. The *Feast* of the *Passover* was appointed to keep up the Remembrance of their Deliverance out of *Egypt*. The Feasts of *New Moons* and of the *beginning of the Year*; to put them in mind of that Providence which orders Times and Seasons; and as to the Fruits of the Earth, they had three solemn Feasts, that of *First-Fruits*, the *Feast of Weeks*, and the *Feast of Tabernacles*; all which had a particular respect to the Blessings they received from the Fruits of the Earth. But above all, the *Sabbath* was appointed for a *Sign between him and them*. So it is often called in Scripture; *I gave them my Sabbaths to be a Sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctifies them*. The *strict Rest* upon that Day was certainly a Commemorative Sign of their Bondage in *Egypt* and their Deliverance out of it; so it is expressly said, *Remember thou wast a Servant in the Land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty Hand and by a stretched out Arm, therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day*. The *Samaritans* to this day, who keep to the Letter of the Law, kindle no Fire upon that Day; and they blame the *Jews* for being too loose observers of it, because they only scruple the kindling of it; but if others kindle it, they are very well contented with it, but the *Samaritans* put it out. But the *Sabbath* was a farther Commemorative Sign, and that was of the Creation of the World: Which was of mighty consequence to the keeping up the Sense of Religion among them. For the *Phœnician Idolaters* gave such an Account of the beginning of things out of a Chaos as must overthrow any Zeal or Concernment for the Worship of any Sovereign Being; for they supposed their very Gods themselves to have had their beginning with the World; which is a very absurd and foolish *Hypothesis*. But the *Israelites* were continually put in mind of their Duty to God as their Creator, by the weekly return of the *Sabbath-day*; wherein the Rest it self was intended for a Commemoration; but whatever put them in mind of their Creation ought likewise to put them in mind of those Duties which they owed to their Creator; and wherein the Sanctification of that Day did chiefly consist.

3. The Levitical Worship had a farther use; which was to represent a better State to come. The Frame of the Temple with the glorious Furniture of it represented Heaven; for as the Apostle saith, those were the *Patterns of things in the Heavens*; and the Anniversary Sacrifice on the Day of Atonement represented the Sufferings of Christ, as the same Author shews at large; the Ashes of the red Heifer making a Water of Purification; the cleansing Effect of the Blood of Christ; and the Scape-goat our Deliverance from Punishment, by vertue of an Atonement: For the Scape-goat was first presented as an Atonement before the Lord, before he escaped into the Wilderness.

II. This

II. This being the Design of the Levitical Worship when that better Sacrifice is offered up to God, and a Religion established upon it for the general good of Mankind, there was great Reason, why the Shadows and Resemblances should be laid aside, and God now be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth.

II. And so I come to the main part of my Design, which is to shew what Influence this ought to have upon us; wherein I shall speak to two things.

1. That the Worship of God in Spirit and in Truth excludes no External Worship consistent with the Gospel.

2. It includes all parts of our *Reasonable Service*.

1. It excludes no External Worship consistent with the Gospel. For our Saviour opposes Spirit and Truth to the Levitical and Typical Worship which was so much contended for by the *Jews* and *Samaritans*; who agreed in the same kind of Worship, but in a different place. But is not all External Worship Corporeal? how can it then agree with the Worship of him who is a Spirit, any more than the Levitical Worship? I answer, That there is a great difference between *Natural* and *Symbolical Worship*: That which our Saviour speaks of, was not such Worship as arises from the Principles of Natural Religion; but 'tis of great Consequence towards preventing Mistakes, to shew how far Bodily Worship of God may arise from the Principles of Natural Religion; and what things were taken into the *Jewish* Worship, which were no part of the Levitical Service, and therefore are not discontinued by the coming of Christ; such as the solemn Times and Places of Worship; the use of publick Prayers and Praises; and afterwards the use of Instrumental Musick, which was set up by *David*, not without Divine Direction, and upon Grounds not peculiar to that People. But as to *Bodily Worship* in general, Natural Religion dictates these things to us:

1. That God ought to be worshipped by us, as we are, with our whole Man as we are compounded of Soul and Body; which ought to be as it were transfused into our Worship. The Body of it must be consistent of something External, without which we cannot joyn together in the Service of God; but there must be a Soul in it too, without which the Body is dead. There must be a Concurrence of our Mind and Affections with our outward Acts of Devotion, which must animate and quicken them, and make them acceptable to God.

2. That our External Behaviour be suitable to the Nature and Design of Divine Worship; *viz.* that it be grave and serious; humble and submissive; otherwise we dishonour God, when we pretend to worship him; and this discovers that we have not such a regard to God in our Minds as we ought to have: Therefore those who are vain and careless, supine and negligent in their Devotion, neither worship God with their Minds nor their Bodies.

3. It is a Dictate of Natural Religion, that we do express the Sense of our Minds by the outward Acts and Carriage of our Bodies in the worship of God, as our Sense of God's infinite Majesty by our Kneeling and Bowing of our Bodies in token of our Adoration; for we may express the Sense of our Minds by Acts as well as by Words: And Acts of External Adoration so they be applied to the only true Object of Worship; *viz.* the Divine Majesty cannot be thought inconsistent with the Spiritual Worship any more than Kneeling in Prayer is; of which there

is no other Account to be given, but that it is a Posture of Reverence, and so signifies the Intention of our Minds to worship God thereby. *Abraham's* Servant worshipped God, by bowing of his Head. *Moses* and *Aaron* fell upon their Faces at the Door of the Tabernacle, which was not required by the Law, but used by them as a Natural Posture of Reverence. When *David* bid the People bless the Lord their God, it is said, that they bowed down their Heads and worshipped the Lord and the King. When *Hezekiah* and the People had made an end of offering, it is said, that they bowed themselves and worshipped. But the Levitical Law required no such thing; it being a natural Expression of Reverence, and therefore, always lawful. And there is nothing under the Gospel, which makes any part of natural Decency in the Worship of God to be more unlawful now, than it was before.

2. *Worshipping God in Spirit and in Truth* takes in all our *Reasonable Service*. For in as much as it is *Reasonable*, it is so far *in Spirit and in Truth*, as it is founded on such Grounds as are agreeable to the Divine Nature.

And this *Reasonable Service* consists in these things;

1. In the offering our selves up to God, as a living Sacrifice. *And I beseech you Brethren*, saith *St. Paul*, *by the mercies of God, that you present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable Service*. God doth not expect any dead Sacrifices from us now under the Gospel, but he doth a living Sacrifice. What is that? *Presenting our Bodies to him*: How is that meant? What! meerly to shew our selves in the Places of Divine Worship? No certainly. Although that be implied in the word *προσφέρειν*, as they brought the Sacrifices, and presented them before the Lord. But therein is implied, a devoting our selves to God and his Service, and therefore it is called, *a holy and living Sacrifice*; when we endeavour to mortify all our sinfull Passions, and to bring our Hearts into a subjection to the Will of God. This is the noblest and best Sacrifice we can offer up to him. In another place he calls *our Body, the Temple of the Holy Ghost*; and our Lusts and Passions are the Sacrifices to be offered up there. Not, that we can do it at one Act, but there must be a constant and sincere Endeavour of doing it. In another place he alludes to the *Jewish Passover*, and then tells us what we are to do in Analogy to that; *purge out therefore your old Leaven*. The Levitical Law was very severe in that: But what is meant by the *old Leaven* among Christians? He tells us, *v. 8. the Leaven of Malice and Wickedness*; and the *Unleavened Bread is Sincerity and Truth*. There were great Corruptions creeping in among them; and some made little or nothing of them, *v. 1, 2*. The Apostle is very severe against the *Incestuous Person*, *v. 5*. but then he bids them all have a care, for *Wickedness was spreading like Leaven*, *v. 6*. therefore watch your selves against all Impurity and Hypocrisie; shew your sincerity by a mighty regard both to your inward Passions and outward Actions. But we cannot purge out all evil Habits; so easily as the *Israelites* did their *Leaven*; nor is this care to last only for a little time, as theirs was; but we must be always cleansing, and never receiving any part of this *Leaven* into our Hearts again. The Moral part of Mens Duties is much harder than the Ritual; we find therefore the *Jews* very free in their Sacrifices, when they would not part with their Sins: But God often tells them, he valued the one far above the other; and so he doth still: And the more we labour to subdue our unreasonable Passions the better
- Sacrifices

Sacrifice we do offer up to God; for this is the holy and living Sacrifice, which is always acceptable to God.

2. Our *Reasonable Service* consists in a due performance of all Religious Duties; without this we can never be said to *worship God in Spirit and in Truth*. The Gospel doth not supersede any Reasonable Duties of Divine Worship, but gives new Arguments and Motives for the performance of them. *Ye are bought with a price*, saith the Apostle, *therefore glorify God in your Body, and in your Spirit which are God's*. He was far from thinking that God regarded now only the Service of our Spirits; but he joyns our Bodies too as bought with a Price: He there speaks of Purity and Chastity, but the Argument will hold for all Religious Duties, wherein we ought to serve God with *our Body* as well as *our Spirit*. Our Body is necessary for attendance, and our Mind for due performance.

1. There must be a diligent Attendance on the Duties of Divine Worship, for where-ever that is wanting there cannot be the *Worship of God in Spirit and in Truth*: For how can they do this, who regard not how little they worship him? There is a Worship of God must be kept up in Publick as well as Private; and no pretence to the Spirit can keep any from it. For when the Apostles had it most, it is said, that they continued in breaking of Bread and in Prayers. But there is an Instance beyond this in our Blessed Saviour himself, who had the Spirit without measure; and yet he is said to frequent the Synagogue Worship as well as the Temple Service on Solemn Occasions: *As his Custom was, he went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath-day*. The Synagogue Worship was Reading, Expounding the Scripture and Prayers; which hath been kept up in the Christian Church; and none can set up the Notion of *Worshipping in Spirit and in Truth* above what our Saviour himself and his Apostles had. And if we would worship God, as we ought, we must have a care of keeping up the Life of Religion by attending on the solemn Service of God, for where that is neglected, instead of Spirit and Truth, there will be Carnality and Hypocrisie.

2. It is not enough to be present with our Bodies, but we must have a great regard to our Minds, especially as to two things; which are directly opposite to *Spirit and Truth*, and those are *Carnality* and *Hypocrisie*:

1. We must have a care of *Carnality*. For the Apostle speaks of a *Carnal Mind*, which many times shews it self in Spiritual Duties:

1. When Carnal Ends are pursued by them. When Men have no due regard to God or his Honour, but Interest and Reputation are carried on by a shew and appearance of Zeal for the performance of some Religious Duties our Saviour gives great warning against this in his Sermon on the Mount: He saith indeed *they have their Reward*; but it is but a very poor and mean Reward:

2. When a Carnal Temper is indulged in them. I mean a light, careless, vain Temper, which only seeks some kind of Diversion and Entertainment of their Fancies, while they should be worshipping God. There is a great difference to be made between this, and the Involuntary Roivings of Imagination; which is so hard to be kept within any due Bounds. The Agitations of Fancy are like the Waves and Rollings of the Sea, without any Rest, and without any Order. A skilful Pilot may conduct his Ship safe through them, but not without many tossings to and fro; but where there is no steerage, but the Ship is left to the Winds and Seas, there is no hopes of coming to the Port. Those of-

ten complain most of wandring thoughts in Prayer, who take most care to prevent them; and as long as they do so, have no such reason to apprehend the danger of them.

2. We must have a care of *Hypocrisie*: For God is a God of Truth, and he hates the Prayers that come out of feigned Lips; *Ye Hypocrites*, saith our Saviour, *well did Esaias prophesie of you, saying, This People draweth nigh unto me with their Mouth, and honoureth me with their Lips, but their Heart is far from me.* Here was a great shew and appearance of Devotion, but there wanted Sincerity; which made *the Calves of their Lips*, as the Prophet calls them, a very displeasing Sacrifice. The *Calves of their Lips* are the Sacrifice of Prayers and Praises instead of young Bullocks; but those are a very mean Sacrifice where the Heart is wanting, which God chiefly regards. God would have *no Honey* in his Sacrifices; some things may be too sweet to be acceptable. Nothing seems more sweet than Hypocrisie, it gives God all the good words that may be, and hopes those will excuse for the inward Falshood: But Hypocrisie is a Defiance to God's Omniscieny, as well as a great Provocation to his Justice. Our Saviour compares Hypocrites to *painted Sepulchres*, which look very fair to the Eye, but they cannot bear being opened, because they are full of Rottenness and Corruption. But I do not mean by Hypocrisie meer failing in some part of our Duty; for all fall short of what they ought to do; but a studied, designed, wilful Hypocrisie, or making a pretence of Religion for base Ends, which must be very loathsome to that God who searches the Heart, and knows all our secret Purposes and Designs.

I conclude with the words of St. Peter, *Wherefore laying aside all Malice, and all Guile, and Hypocrisie, and Envyings, and Evil-speakings; as new-born Babes desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.*



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SERMON XL.

OF THE

Eternal Priesthood

OF

CHRIST.

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HEBREWS VI. 20.

*Whither the Forerunner is for us entred; even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the Order of Melchisedeck.*

**T**HE Apostle in this Epistle makes it his great Business to confirm the believing *Jews* in the Christian Faith; and to that End he perswades them, *v. 12. to be followers of them who by faith and patience inherit the promises*: And therefore they ought not to be discouraged; if they met with Difficulties and Disappointments; for so the Patriarchs did long before them; yet they added *Patience* to their Faith, and by both together were made Partakers of those *great and precious Promises* which God had made to them; which chiefly comprehended two things;

1. The coming of Christ in the Flesh, according to the Promise made to *Abraham*; *in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*; which the Apostle to the *Galatians* shews, was chiefly intended of Christ; *And to thy seed which is Christ.* Gen. 22: 18. Acts. 3. 25. Gal. 3. 8.
2. The Promise of Eternal Life by him; for he shews that *Abraham* did look beyond the Blessings of a numerous Posterity, enjoying the promised Land. For, saith he, *They confessed they were strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and that they desire a better Country, that is, a heavenly.* H. B. 11. 13. 16. And so in this Chapter, when he speaks of the great Confirmation of the Promise to *Abraham*, he adds, *the strong Consolation* which it afforded to those who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the Hope that is set before us, *v. 18. i. e.* such who have supported themselves under

all the Storms and Agitations of an unkind World, with the Hopes of a Blessed Immortality, when this wearisom and uncertain Life shall be at an end. Therefore he adds, That *this Hope is an Anchor of the Soul both sure and stedfast*, to keep Men from making shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience. But it is such an Anchor as is cast upwards, and hath its hold in Heaven; for saith he, *It entereth into that within the Veil*. The Holy of Holies in the Jewish Tabernacle was the Representation of Heaven; and this was separated from the other parts by a Veil, within which none were to enter but the High-Priest once a Year. In allusion to this, he here affirms, that *Jesus as our High-Priest and Forerunner is entred*, by his Ascension into Heaven; but then he shews, that he did not enter as the *Aaronical High-Priest* did, to make but a short stay there; for he was an High-Priest of another Order; for *he was made an High-Priest after the Order of Melchisedeck*. Which words have a Respect to *Psalms 110. 5. The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the Order of Melchisedeck*. Of whom doth the *Psalmist* speak this? of one superiour to *David*, as our Saviour argues; *The Lord said unto my Lord, v. 1. But what doth he mean by making him a Priest after the Order of Melchisedeck? How comes this to be introduced in such a manner, The Lord hath sworn and will not repent? And how comes the Apostle to make so great a matter of it, as he doth in this Epistle? when he sets out Melchisedeck by so many Circumstances, ch. 7. 1. and argues from his Name, King of Righteousness, v. 2. from the place where he was King, King of Salem, which is, King of Peace. And he not only argues from what the Scripture doth say, but from what it doth not say of him; and because the Scripture takes no notice of his Genealogy, nor of his Death, he saith, v. 3. That he was without Father, without Mother, without Descent, which were things necessary to be observed in the Aaronical Priesthood; and that he had neither beginning of Days nor end of Life. How can any Argument be taken from thence, since the History of Moses is so very short? But the Apostle goes farther, and saith, He abideth a Priest continually; which is something more than a meer Negative, that we do not read of his Death. To clear this Difficulty, we are to consider, that the Apostle's chief Design is to prove Christ to have an Eternal Priesthood in Heaven, and that therein he was far superiour to the Aaronical Priesthood: Who is not made after the Law of a Carnal Commandment but after the Power of an endless Life; i. e. Not so, as that there should be a Successor in the same Office, but that he should always continue to Exercise his Priesthood in Heaven. For he testifieth, thou art a Priest for ever after the Order of Melchisedeck, v. 17.*

Heb. 9. 3,  
7.

Matth. 22.  
44.

Here then lies the main Foundation, on which the Apostle builds his Discourse, that God had testified this concerning him. But what was this Priesthood of the Order of Melchisedeck? And there are five things remarkable in the Account given of him in Scripture.

1. That he was not a Priest of the Levitical Order; but was superiour to *Abraham*, whom he blessed; *And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better, v. 7. and even Levi himself paid Tithes in Abraham, v. 9. For he was yet in the Loin of his Father when Melchisedeck met him, v. 10.* So that this Priesthood must be of an Order above the *Levitical*; and not tied up to the Rites and Customs of that Law.

2. That he came not to his Priesthood after the *Levitical* manner, by being not so by *Descent* from such Parents which gave him a Right to it.

For

For no such thing is mentioned concerning him; And so far the Negative Argument is of force; for his *Descent* must have been distinctly expressed.

3. That he was one of far greater Power and Authority than the High-Priests among the *Jews* were by their Institution; which only respected the Worship of God, but *Melchisedeck was King of Salem*; and so it was a Royal Priesthood; which implied not meerly a Respect to God, but to the good of the people under his Care and Government.

4. That there was *no Succession* at all to him in his Priesthood. Some say, he lived a great while in the Exercise of it; but they have no good Authority for it; but we are certain, that we read of none who succeeded him at *Salem*. *Sudas in V.*

5. That the great things which this Priesthood regards are *Righteousness and Peace*. For, to that purpose the Apostle gives the Interpretation of his Name, *Melchisedeck King of Righteousness, and King of Salem, which is King of Peace*, ch. 7. v. 2. There is a greater Liberty in the Application of Types than in drawing Conclusions from Premises. The Apostle shews, that there was something extraordinary in *Melchisedeck's Priesthood*, when he saith, ch. 5. 11. *Of whom we have many things to say and hard to be uttered*. Not as though the things themselves concerning him were such; but that the Typical Nature of this Priesthood, is built on such things as are not so easie to be apprehended, unless it be first believed that God did design Christ to be a High-Priest of an Order superiour to the Levitical, and therefore singled out such a Person as *Melchisedeck*, whose very Name, and Place, and Manner of being made High-Priest should represent him who was to appear so long after. For *Melchisedeck's* appearing of a sudden as *the Priest of the most High God at Salem*; and his *Blessing of Abraham*; and no mention at all of him before or after; were such extraordinary Circumstances, that some have rather thought it was an Appearance of the *Son of God* himself, as a High-Priest at that time; (as he appeared to him as an Angel at other times; *And the Lord appeared unto him in the Plains of Mamre*) and that he was then seen *in the likeness of the same Body* in which he came afterwards; from whence the Apostle saith, *That he was made like unto the Son of God*; which is a very hard Construction, that he should be made *like unto himself*. How came a single Appearance to make an *Order of Priesthood*? What a harsh Interpretation must this be, *Thou art a Priest for ever*, not according to the Appearance of *Melchisedeck*, but to his Order as opposed to the Order of *Aaron*? Others of old, as *Theodotus* and his Followers, would have Christ to be made in the likeness of *Melchisedeck*, by whom they understood a *certain Divine Power* appearing as the High-Priest in Human Shape. *Origen* and *Didymus* thought him an Angel, as *St. Hierom* tells us. Some again, as *Hierax* and his Followers, took *Melchisedeck* to be the Holy Ghost; who they say was like unto the Son of God, as to his Divinity and Intercession. The *Jews* and *Samaritans* (as appears by *Epiphanius*) take *Melchisedeck* to be *Sem*: The *Chaldee Paraphrase of Jonathan* on *Gen. 14. 18.* expressly saith it, (but not the old one of *Onkelos*; and so upon *1 Chron. 1. 24.* and the modern *Jews* run into this Opinion, for this Reason, because they would not allow any one to be greater than *Abraham*, but *Sem*. But this is not consistent with the Account which the Apostle gives of him; for his *Descent* was very well known and set down in Scripture; and *Le-*

*Gen. 14. 18.*

*18. 1.*

*Tertul. de Prescript. c. 53.*

*Aug. de Her. c. 34. Theod. Her. Fab. 1. c. Epiph. Her. 67.*

*Epiph. Her. 55. Hier ad E-vagr.*

*vi* was in the *Loyns of Sem*, as well as of *Abraham*; but this Argument implies, that he was not in the *Loyns of Melchisedeck*. And the more ancient *Jews* were of another Opinion, as appears by *Josephus* and *Philo*; and I can see no sufficient Reason why at that time there should not be such a Person as *Melchisedeck King of Salem, Priest of the most High God, who blessed Abraham*; ( and this was the general Opinion of the Ancient Fathers, as appears by *St. Hierom*; ) for the Patriarchal Religion was not then so much decayed in those Parts, but that there might be such a Righteous and Good Prince, as *Philo* calls him, who might be the chief Minister of God as to his Publick Worship: And it is said of *Rebecca*, *That she went to enquire of the Lord*; which some understand of *Melchisedeck* then living, and it is hard to think of any other. But the main thing designed by the Apostle, is under *Melchisedeck* to set forth the Eternal Priesthood of Christ in Heaven; *Whither the Forerunner is for us entred, even Jesus made an High-Priest after the Order of Melchisedeck*.

Wherein are two things to be considered :

- I. Wherein the Nature of this Priesthood of Christ consists.
- II. What Influence it ought to have upon us.

I. Wherein the Nature of it consists; and that in two things:

1. In his continual Intercession with God for his People.
2. In his Care and Government of his Church.

1. In his continual Intercession with God on behalf of his People. For the Office of the *High-Priest* was to be a Mediator between God and the People, *Ch. 5. 1.* and therefore he saith, he must be of God's own appointing, *v. 4.* and this he proves as to Christ, *v. 5, 6.* and *v. 10.* called of God an *High-Priest after the Order of Melchisedeck*. And this part of Intercession is more particularly applied to him as our High-Priest, *Ch. 7. 25.* *Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make Intercession for them.* And *Ch. 9. 24.* *For Christ is not entred into the Holy Places made with Hands, which are the Figures of the True; but into Heaven it self, now to appear in the presence of God for us.*

Now this Appearing of Christ as our High-Priest in Heaven is look'd on by the Apostle as a point of so great Consequence, that our present Support and Comfort, in the way to our everlasting Happiness, is said by him to depend very much upon it; as will appear by these things;

1. That we have an High-Priest in Heaven who is sensible of our Condition. This the Apostle thought very fit to be used as an Argument for the Christians at that time bearing up under the Pressures and Difficulties they met with in the World. *Seeing then that we have a great High-Priest that is passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our Profession:* As if he had said to them, Be not discouraged by the Hardships you meet with in your Christian Profession; you have little hopes of Comfort as to this World; but look up to Heaven; he that suffered for you on the Cross is now our great High-Priest in Heaven, making Intercession for you, and he knows all your Circumstances. *For, saith he, we have not an High-Priest which cannot be touch'd with the feeling of our Infirmities, but was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without Sin.* When you meet with Afflictions, and Crosses, and Tribulations, which make an Impression upon you, and are apt to over-

overwhelm you and make you to sink under the Burden of them; then consider what the State and Condition of Christ himself was here upon Earth. If you are sensible of Reproach and Contempt, which you think you have not deserved, consider him, who although he was the Son of God, yet *he was despised and rejected of Men*; even of those whom he came to save. If you are in a low and mean Condition in the World, and think it hard to be put to such Streights and Difficulties for a Subsistence, think of him *who had not whereon to lay his Head*. If you are troubled with inward Grievings, with sad Apprehensions of your selves and very disturbing Imaginations, think of your High-Priest in Heaven; *who in the Days of his Flesh offered up Prayers and Supplications with strong Crying and Tears unto God*. And surely those must be very great and astonishing Pains, both inward and outward, which should make the Son of God cry out in the Anguish of his Soul, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? But he is now in Heaven, and far above Principalities and Powers, and the reach of our Calamities*; No, saith the Apostle, he went through these things himself, and retains such a sense of the Condition of Human Nature, that in all things he became like unto his Brethren that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest; and is touched with the feeling of our Infirmities. But doth not God know all our Wants and Afflictions of himself? how can this then add to our Support, that we have an High-Priest that is sensible of them? It pleased God out of his infinite Wisdom and Goodness to appoint us such a Mediator and High-Priest, as might stoop so low as to undergo the common Passions and Infirmities of Human Nature, as well as those inward Agonies and unknown Sufferings which were more peculiar to his being a Sacrifice for our Sins. We are apt to think the Distance between an Infinite God and such wretched Creatures, as we are, to be so great, that it were Presumption in us to think he should condescend so low as to take notice of our Infirmities; therefore out of his Tenderness and Compassion to Mankind, he hath provided for them a Mediator and Intercessor, who went through so many Trials of all kinds; as make him a Compassionate High-Priest, to whom they might address themselves under their Troubles, as one who had a due sense of their Condition. But we are not to suppose, that our High-Priest is equally moved with all the Infirmities and Troubles which Mankind bring upon themselves. For many of them are owing to the wilful Folly and supine Negligence, or meer Humour and peevishness of Tempers; and in case any persons sink under their own Faults, it is not to be expected that our compassionate High-Priest should have any such tender Sense or Commiseration of them. But when our Infirmities are not our Faults; when we labour against them, and endeavour all we can to get the better of them; when we struggle with our Natural Passions and keep our Minds in due Submission to the Will of God, and resign our selves up to him, then we may comfort our selves that our High-Priest in Heaven will both pity and relieve us. Which leads to the next;

2. That our High-Priest in Heaven is not only sensible of our Condition, but is ready to assist and help us according to our Necessities: So the Apostle pursues his Argument; *Let us therefore come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy and find Grace to help in time of need*. What greater Encouragement can there be to Penitent Sinners, than to have recourse to a *Throne of Grace*? especially, when we have such an High-Priest, who is set down on the Right-hand of the Throne

*Throne of the Majesty in the Heavens.* A Throne of Majesty is enough to terrify guilty Creatures; but if we approach it with humble and penitent Hearts, we have an High-Priest on the Right-hand of the Throne, who intercedes for all that come to God by him; and so turns the Throne of Majesty into a Throne of Mercy. God hath a Throne of Justice to punish impenitent and obstinate Offenders; but his Admission of our High-Priest into Heaven to intercede for those that come to God by him, is a certain Argument that there is a Throne of Grace for us to fly to. When Christ suffer'd on the Cross he became a Sacrifice of Atonement for our Sins; and there could be no greater Argument that God had accepted it, than his receiving the Priest that offered it into Heaven. For, *by his own Blood he enter'd into the Holy Place, having obtained Eternal Redemption for us.* As the High-Priest under the Law was not to go into the Holy of Holies without the Blood of the Sacrifice for expiation; but the People were in great Fear and Apprehension till they saw him come out again, for then they knew his Intercession was accepted; but here the case is otherwise, for his going into the Holy of Holies was the clearest Evidence, that his Sacrifice was accepted. For, *after he had offered one Sacrifice for Sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God:* And thereby the Throne of Grace is advanced in so triumphant a manner, that the Apostle seems to encourage Men to the use of too much freedom in their Applications to it: *Let us therefore come boldly to the Throne of Grace.* And to the same purpose he enlarges himself more afterwards, *Having therefore, Brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus; by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the Veil, that is to say, his Flesh; and having an High-Priest over the House of God; let us draw near with a true Heart, in full Assurance of Faith, having our Hearts sprinkled from an Evil Conscience.* The meaning whereof is this, that if we sincerely repent of our Sins, we have no reason to mistrust now the Mercy of God in the Pardon of them; nor his readiness to receive us if we make our Applications to him through our High-Priest who is in Heaven. But why doth he speak of coming with Boldness to the Throne of Grace? Is not a humble Diffidence more becoming Penitent Sinners, than such a degree of Assurance? No doubt the deepest Humility and inward Contrition doth most become us in all our Applications to the Throne of Grace; but yet it must be without Mistrust of the Grace and Mercy of God after such ground of Assurance, as God hath given. If Christ were not made a Propitiation for our Sins; if he were not admitted as our High-Priest into Heaven, there might be great Reason, if not for Despair, yet for great Doubts and Fears, and inward Dissatisfaction of Mind in our Approaches to God. But the Apostle tells us, we may now *come with boldness to the Throne of Grace.* But what shall we get by it? The most desirable things in the World for us; and those are,

1. The Favour of God, *that we may obtain Mercy.*
2. Seasonable Supplies of Grace, *and find Grace to help in time of need.*

1. The Favour of God. One of the greatest Ends of our High-Priest's appearing in our Nature was *to make Reconciliation for the Sins of the People;* and therefore our Apostle saith, *That having by himself purged our Sins, he sat down on the Right-hand of the Majesty on high: That now once in the end of the World he appeared to put away Sin by the Sacrifice*

*fice of himself.* But if the Sacrifice of Christ were only upon the Cross, and our Sins purged and put away thereby, what was there then left for him to do in Heaven, as our High-Priest, in order to our obtaining Mercy? For our Sins were the only Hindrance of Mercy; and if those were done away by the Death of Christ, what need his Intercession in Heaven?

I answer, That the Sacrifice of Christ may be considered two ways;

1. By way of Atonement as to the Justice of God; so Christ suffered for our sakes and in our stead; *he was wounded for our Transgressions; was made Sin for us; and so purged away our Sins by his Blood;* i. e. he laid the Foundation for our Reconciliation with God.

2. By way of Intercession as to the Mercy of God; and so the Sacrifice of Christ is considered in Heaven; as the High-Priest under the Law went into the Holy of Holies with the Blood of the Sacrifices, which had been already offered upon the Altar; but that Blood was to be sprinkled before the Mercy-seat in order to his more powerful Intercession. So Christ our *High-Priest* is entered *within the Veil, into the holy place with his own Blood; there to appear in the presence of God for us;* i. e. to carry on the Design of his Death for our advantage; which is his true Intercession for us. And the Sacrifice of Atonement having been accepted in general, there remains only the particular application of it, to all such as do truly come to God by him for the benefit of it. But there are some Acts to be done by every one that hopes for it; as Repentance, Faith, and a stedfast resolution of Amendment and new Obedience, which we cannot do of our selves; and the Intercession of Christ with God is in order to obtain the Grace of God, which is necessary for it. And therefore the Scripture attributes the Expiation of Sin to the Death of Christ, and a new Life to his Resurrection and the Consequences of it. *Who was delivered for our Offences, and rose again for our Justification. For, if when we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his Life. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh Intercession for us.* The Apostle seems to lay more weight upon the Resurrection, Ascension and Intercession of Christ, than upon his Death. *Yea rather that is risen again.* As though all the Fruits of his Death had been lost as to us, had not the other followed. But there was in God's design a necessary connexion of these together, the Death of Christ was the Sacrifice, *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all;* but his Resurrection declared him to be the Son of God with Power. And his sitting at the right hand of God, and Intercession for us, shews not only his mighty Interest and Power, but his great Care and Concernment to carry on the Design of his Death, for all such as *draw near to him with a true heart, and having their hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience.* But how can this be done by us, whose hearts are so defiled and polluted with sin? It is impossible for us to cleanse our selves; but the Preventing and Assisting Grace of God will enable us to do it, if we be not wanting to our selves. *Abraham* was not wanting to himself as to his own security and defence against his Enemies; but he came back wearied and wanting Refreshment: *Melchisedeck* did not stay till *Abraham* sent for him; but he prevented him with his kindness; *and he brought forth Bread and Wine, the most seasonable Refreshments to him, and then went on to bless him.* Thus

our High-Priest after the Order of *Melchisedeck*, prevents us by his Grace, and offers those Helps to us, which are most suitable to our Necessities. What was it but his *Preventing Grace* which made him become a Sacrifice for our Sins? What is it but his *Preventing Grace* which hath made the Means of Grace and Salvation known and continued among us; when so many Nations in the World are without them? What is it but his *Preventing Grace*, which hath kept us out of so many Temptations and from falling by them? What is it but *Preventing Grace*, which rouses us out of our natural Lethargy in Sin; and awakens us so as to make us look about us (if at least we do so) and to consider where we are, what we are doing, and whither we are going, and *what we shall do that we may be saved*? This preventing and exciting Grace of God, is that which our Saviour speaks of, when he

John 6.44.

saith, *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him.* And the Father's drawing is to be owned as the effect of the Son's Intercession, for even the beginning as well as carrying on our Salvation is due to him, *who is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make Intercession for them.*

2. Another Fruit of Christ's Intercession as our High-Priest is *Blessing of us*; not meerly by Invocation and Thanksgiving, as *Melchisedeck* did, but by bestowing his Blessings upon us, or *giving grace to help in time of need.*

This is indeed a mighty Privilege, if it be not too great to be expected by us. For we always stand *in need of Grace to help us*, to subdue our Lusts, to bear our Afflictions, to resist Temptations, to improve our Minds, to prepare us for another World; and may we hope for supplies of Grace great enough for all our Necessities. But here we must distinguish,

1. Between Necessary Supplies of Grace and Extraordinary. We have no reason to question, but that God will give to all that seek it sincerely, such Supplies as are necessary to carry them to Heaven; for he that prevents us with his Loving Kindness will not be wanting to those that seek it; since one great part of Christ's Intercession is to recommend the Prayers of his People to make them to be effectual. Our Saviour

Joh 16.23.

told his Disciples, *that whatsoever they should ask the Father in his Name he would give it them.* This is one way to hope for Acceptance, but that is not all; *to ask in Christ's Name* will be more prevalent, when

Heb. 7.25.

Rom 8.34.

1 John 2.1.

he asks together with them. *For he ever lives to make Intercession for them; and he is an Advocate with the Father:* Not, as though he pleaded their Cause in Words, but that he doth in the most effectual man-

1 John 5.

14.

1 Tim. 2.

14.

James 1.5.

ner recommend their Petitions. And therefore St. *John* saith, *This is the confidence, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* And we are sure that necessary Supplies of Grace are so, since *he would have all men to be saved.* If any of you lack *Wisdom*, saith St. *James*, *let him ask it of God that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.* What! If they pray for the *Wisdom of Solomon*, or the *Wisdom of an Angel*? No certainly; but the *Wisdom* most proper for Mankind; the *Wisdom of knowing our Duty and Practising of it*; the *Wisdom of Patience and Resignation to the will of God*; of which the Apostle speaks, *v. 4.*

But there are some Extraordinary Trials of *Patience*, may every good man hope for supply of Grace suitable to them? If they be such Trials



as God puts them upon; if the Honour of God and Religion be concerned in them, they have no reason to question it; and this was the case of the *Jewish* Christians to whom the Apostle writes this Epistle; they had suffered much and were like to do much more; and therefore he encourages them in all their distresses to come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that they may find Grace to help in time of need. Heb. 12.  
33, 34.

2. We must distinguish what God judges to be *the time of Need* and what we do. God reserves nothing to himself as to the Matter of his Peoples Prayers, but only to judge what is best for them. He assures them that he will hear their Prayers and grant their Requests; but how? in such a manner as shall be most for their good. And would they be heard in another manner? Would they have their Prayersturned into Curses, and their Petitions answered to their own ruine? St. *James* speaks of some who were impudent Beggars indeed; and they grumbled that they were denied. *Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss that ye may consume it upon your lusts.* They wanted what they thought needful to feed their wanton, covetous or ambitious desires; and they took it very ill, since they asked it of God, that he would deny them. As though any thing were to be had, if they prayed for it; and nothing were to be denied to Petitioners at the Throne of Grace; although if they had their Desires, they would make the Answers of their Prayers to be only Fewel for their Lusts. But God both in Justice and Mercy denies such as come with such a strange sort of Boldness to the Throne of Grace; and which, if God designs not to punish them, is sure to be denied. If we would not be denied, we must always remember it is the Throne of Grace we come to, and that which we are to ask is for Grace to help in time of need. If we keep to that we need not fear a gracious Answer.

But did not St. *Paul* himself pray in a very particular case, and that thrice to have it removed from him, and God denied him; how then can we hope for Grace to help in time of need? It is impossible for us now to know all the Circumstances of St. *Paul's* case, unless we had one of his Revelations; but whether it were a sharp Pain, or a violent Temptation, &c. it was that which God thought fit to humble him with; and therefore denied to remove it, but promised him Grace sufficient to support him; which was a far greater Blessing than to take away his Affliction and his Grace together. If God denies our Prayers in one thing and makes it up in far better, have we any cause to complain? If he continues Afflictions and gives greater supplies of Grace to bear them, we have more cause to thank God for what he gives, than to be uneasy at what he denies. 2 Cor. 12.  
7, 8.

II. The other part of the *Royal Priesthood* of Christ lies in his Care and Government of his People. And therein we may consider,

1. His Authority and Power being King as well as Priest.
2. His Care and Concernment for the good of his Church.
3. The great End of his Government, *viz.* Righteousness and Peace.

1. His Authority and Power. *All Power, saith Christ, is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth.* This was before his Ascension; and after it is said, *That God exalted him with his Right-hand to be a Prince and Saviour. And that God hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name above every Name.* And in this Epistle it is so often mentioned in several Mat. 28.18.  
Acts. 5.31.  
Phil. 2.9.

Heb. 1. 3. ral Expressions, as *that he sate down on the Right-hand of the Majesty on*  
 8. 1. *high; or, in the Heavens, and at the Right-hand of God; or, at the*  
 10. 12. *Right-hand of the Throne of God.* All which import the same thing, *viz.*  
 12. 2. *his Power and Authority over his Church.*

But there is a twofold Church of Christ.

One Internal and Invisible, whereby he Reigns in the Hearts of his People, by their free and entire Subjection of themselves to him; and by renouncing any Interest which stands in competition with him, and by governing our selves according to his Laws; the chief whereof are those which relate to Righteousness and Peace.

But besides this, there is an External and Visible Kingdom of Christ in the World. This is a matter of Consequence for us to consider. For if there be no other Kingdom of Christ but what lies in the Hearts of his Subjects; then it would follow;

1. That the Prophecies concerning the large Extent of Christ's King-  
 Pfal. 2. 8. dom could never be known to be accomplished: For that could be only  
 Isa. 2. 2. by what is External and Visible, since we cannot see into the Hearts of  
 Micah. 4. Men. There must be therefore a true visible Church, wherein the Seat  
 1. 2. of Christ's Kingdom is to be: But not a Church equally visible at all  
 Zech. 9. 10. times; nor free from all Errors, so as to be an Infallible Guide; For  
 Dan 9. 14 neither of these things is ever promised to a Visible Church; for it is  
 one thing to be, and another to be Infallible; and it is one thing really  
 to be, and another to be Conspicuous and Glorious; as we find both in  
 the State of the Jewish and the Christian Church.

2. That the Church of Christ must be taken in a stricter sense than it  
 Matt. 13. was by Christ and his Apostles. Our Saviour compares the Kingdom of  
 24. Heaven to a *Field, having good Seed and Tares; to a Net, which takes in*  
 47. *of every kind; to a Feast, to which all are invited; and himself to a Vine*  
 22. 10. *that had unfruitful Branches.* And the Churches of *Corinth and Galatia*  
 John 15. 2. *are so called, because they consisted of such as were called to be Saints.*

3. This would overthrow all the real Privileges of the Christian  
 1 Cor. 1. 2. Church. For to what purpose is the admission into it by Baptism, if  
 2 Cor. 1. 1. there be no Church but what is invisible? For if we can own none for  
 Gal. 1. 2, 6. true Members of the Church but such as are Members of the Invisible,  
 we must own none at all; unless some certain Mark be found out to  
 distinguish one from the other. And if they stay till then, the Church  
 will not be known till the Day of Judgment; for then *the secrets of all*  
*hearts will be disclosed.*

2. We come to consider Christ's *Care and Concernment* for the Good  
 of his Church. And that lies in these things.

1. In sending the Holy Spirit to supply his Absence. This was re-  
 markably fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost; which St. Peter instances  
 Acts 2. 33. in as the great Effect of his Exaltation. Therefore being by the Right-  
 hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the Promise  
 of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.  
 This was the Accomplishment of that Promise which Christ before his  
 Ascension had made to his Apostles, when he gave them their solemn  
 Mission; *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you;* and lest they  
 John 20. should think themselves unqualified for such a great Work, *he breathed on*  
 21. *them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; Whosoever Sins ye*  
 22. *remit, &c.* Which shew that the former words are not to be understood  
 with respect to the miraculous Descent of the Holy Ghost upon them  
 afterwards, but to the Authority then given them by their solemn Mission.

But

But the Descent of the Holy Ghost afterwards, was to give them extraordinary Qualifications for discharge of that Office already committed to them by Christ before his Ascension. But after this the Apostle by Christ's command *waited in Jerusalem* for the fulfilling of this Promise of the Spirit; which our Saviour calls *being baptized with the Holy Ghost*; because of the plentiful Effusion of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost then upon them. And it is observable that upon this, the Erecting a Christian Church first began; for they only lived together in Expectation before but immediately upon St. Peter's preaching 3000 were converted; and then they continued in the Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread and in Prayers. And it follows, that God added to the Church daily such as should be saved. So that when we commemorate the Descent of the Holy Ghost, we likewise praise God for laying the foundation of the Christian Church, as it is a distinct, visible Society.

2. His care and Concernment for the Good of his Church is seen in the constant Provision he hath made for the Guides and Directors of it. This St. Paul takes particular notice of, as the fruit of Christ's Ascension into Heaven. *Wherefore he saith when he ascended up on high he led Captivity captive.* It being the custom of those who were newly exalted to the highest Dignity, or entred in Triumph after a great Victory, to scatter large Donatives among the People. So when Christ not only triumphed over Hell and the Grave, but was exalted to the right hand of the Throne of God, he then not only bestowed these miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles, but settled a constant Order of such in the Church, who were to attend to the Necessities of it, till there will be no farther need of Instruction. And this the Apostle owns to be one of the Gifts of Christ to his Church consequent upon his Ascension. *And he gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ.* Here we find a great variety of Gifts, but all intended for the Service of the Church; so elsewhere, *The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withall.* i. e. which way soever the Spirit manifests itself it is for the Churches advantage. Whether they be Apostles, or Prophets, or Teachers, or Miracles, or Gifts of Healing, or Helps, Governments, Diversities of Tongues, all are for one and the same end; viz. that the Church of God may receive benefit by them. Some Gifts were wholly extraordinary and miraculous, being for the Conviction of the Unbelieving World; and yet these were very useful to the Bodies or Souls of Men; as Healing Diseases for the former, and the Gift of Tongues for the latter, without which the Doctrine of Christ could not have been understood. Some were extraordinary in the manner, but ordinary in the Design; as interpreting Scripture by Revelation; acting by immediate Commission from Christ or his Apostles; as the Apostles from Christ, and the Evangelists from the Apostles; but the Work it self of Preaching and Governing was of an ordinary and standing nature, which the Church would always find necessary.

3. Christ's care of his Church is seen in his watching over it and continual Presence with it. Immediately after Christ had said to his Apostles, *All power is given to me,* &c. he prescribes them their Duty, and promises his continual Presence, *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the World.* How could they imagine this possible, when they knew he was to ascend up into Heaven, and there to sit at the right hand

hand of God? But although his Human Nature could not any longer be present with them; yet his Divine Spirit might, to direct, and conduct, and bless them; and that is the great Promise he made when he was to leave them; *And I will pray the Father and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever*: So that the coming of the Holy Ghost, and his continuance with his Church is an Effect of Christ's Intercession. What wonderful care and tenderness doth Christ express to his Apostles before his Ascension? He promised, *He would not leave them Comfortless, but he would come to them himself*, and conversed among them for many days, *speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God*. When he was to ascend up to Heaven *he led them out as far as Bethany, and then he lift up his Hands and blessed them, and while he blessed them he was parted from them and carried up into Heaven*. He was the true *Melchisedeck*, who did thus bless his People, in the most emphatical manner, just as he was in his Passage to Heaven; where he continues to bless them in the most effectual and beneficial manner, with those things which are most necessary to carry them to Heaven.

3. And those are *Righteousness and Peace*; which the Apostle singles out as the most peculiar things to *Melchisedeck*, who was *King of Righteousness and King of Peace*. For the Kingdom of God, saith St. Paul, *consists not in Meats and Drinks*; (which the Levitical Service had so much regard to) *but in Righteousness and Peace*, and that which results from both, an inward and spiritual Joy, which he calls *Joy in the Holy Ghost*. The Design of Christ was to put an end to that Levitical Service, *which could not make him that did the Service perfect, as pertaining to the Conscience*. But the Blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, is the most effectual means to purge our Consciences from dead works to serve the living God. The purging our Consciences from the pollution of Sin and the offering up our selves to God, as our *Reasonable Service*, are the main of our Duties under our *High-Priest after the Order of Melchisedeck*. He was a Priest of the most high God, long before the Levitical Service was appointed; and before the Covenant of Circumcision was made with Abraham. So that, *Universal Righteousness and Peace*, were then the distinguishing Characters of this Priesthood, and of all such who served the most high God. There was, no doubt, a Publick and Solemn Service of God then, else what was the constant Office of him that was the High Priest? What we read was only Occasional upon meeting with Abraham, that he blessed him; but we cannot imagin that this was all he was appointed for. Although the World was very degenerate, yet there was a Patriarchal Religion kept up by the better sort, who had not lost all Sense of God and their Duty; as we see in *Abimelech*, who appealed to God that appeared to him in a Dream, as to the Integrity of his Heart; which God himself allowed. And there is no reason to suppose there could be no other Priest of the most high God but *Sem*, while he was living (as he must be at that time, if the Hebrew Computation be followed.) *Sem* was a great Support of the Patriarchal Religion where-ever he lived; but it is very improbable he should be at that time in *Canaan* and no notice of him before with respect to Abraham, who was lineally descended from him. But why might not *Melchisedeck* be raised up by God himself to be a King of Righteousness and Prince of Peace? and so *Philo* affirms of him, that God advanced him as a Pattern of a good King that governs by Laws, and consults the Good of his People, as well as of a fit High-Priest

to the most high God. And Christ being a High-Priest after his Order, he governs by the most righteous and holy Laws, and advances in his Kingdom whatever tends to better and improve the Welfare and Happiness of Mankind; which do especially consist in Righteousness and Peace. The former takes in all the good Qualities of our Minds with respect to Purity, Holiness, Integrity and Justice; the latter all those Vertues which tend to subdue our fierce and irregular Passions, and to make them Calm and Gentle, Meek, Patient and Submissive in every Condition. And so *Righteousness and Peace* are not only our Duties as Christ's Subjects, but the proper Characters of his Kingdom, and the Honour and Glory of his true Religion. But where these are not, whatever pretences Men make, they are no true Subjects of Christ's Kingdom; all Unrighteousness and Unquietness is from the Devil; and is the true Spirit of that Kingdom, which is opposite to Christ's. And by this Mark persons may judge to whose Kingdom they belong; for *the Wisdom that is not from above leads to Envyings and Strife, and Unquietness, and every Evil Work; but the Wisdom that is from above, (which descends from our Melchisedeck) is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easie to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, without Partiality, and without Hypocrisie. And the Fruit of Righteousness is sown in Peace of them that make Peace.* James 3<sup>d</sup>  
15, 16, 17,  
18.

It remains only now to make some Inferences from what hath been said of Christ's being our High-Priest after the Order of *Melchisedeck*.

1. To understand the true Notion of Christ's Intercession which is as our High Priest in Heaven; and there are are two principal Characters of it: (1.) That he must be appointed of God for that purpose, *Heb. 5. 4, 5.* (2.) That it is by vertue of a Sacrifice of Attonement which he offered up to God for us. And from hence it follows, that there is no colour under the Gospel for distinguishing Mediators of Intercession from Mediators of Redemption; and it is not only vain and foolish but extreamly derogatory to the Honour of Christ to set up any Intercessors in Heaven besides him.

2. We learn from hence whither to go in all our Streights and Difficulties; even to our High-Priest who hath so much Compassion and Tenderness, and so much Readiness and Power to help in the time of need. Many times persons are so overwhelmed with Troubles, and so cast down in their Perplexities, that they know not whither to go: Here we see a way opened and that is to the Throne of Grace, which those who most despise and slight now, will at last find the most valuable Privilege to have access to it.

3. Whither we ought to direct our selves in the course of our Lives, *viz. where Christ our Forerunner is entred*, that is in Heaven. If we look on him as our Forerunner, we ought to follow his Steps; and *to walk as he walked*, in a humble, holy, unblameable Life, doing our Duty and submitting to God's holy Will, that so by Faith and Patience, and by being Followers of Righteousness and Peace, we may inherit the Promises.

4. With what Thankfulness we ought to own all the blessed Effects of Christ's entring into Heaven, and his Intercession with God on behalf of his Church; especially that of sending the Holy Ghost, concerning which our Saviour said to his Disciples; *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.* John 14.  
16. It pleased God so to order it, that the sending the Holy Ghost

16. 7. was reserved till after Christ's Ascension, that they might see he would make abundant Recompence for the want of his Bodily Presence. And therefore he tells them, that *it was expedient for them that he should go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart I will send him unto you.* Hereby, they had not only such Supplies of the Spirit, as were necessary for them, as to their Duty and Support; but they had withall a full Evidence of the Truth of Christ's Ascension and Intercession in Heaven. For the Gift was so extraordinary as could only come from God; and the season of giving it shews through whose Intercession it was given, according to the Promise he had made before. So that this is not a meer Commemoration of some Miraculous Gifts on the Day of Pentecost so long ago; but it contains in it the most clear and convincing Evidence of the Truth of Christ's Ascension; and the Efficacy of his Intercession.

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SERMON XLI.  
 OF THE  
 True Happiness  
 OF  
 MANKIND,  
 AND  
 Immortality of the SOUL.

PART I.

St. JOHN VI. 68.

*Then Simon Peter said unto him, Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of Eternal Life.*

**I**N this Chapter we read of an extraordinary Miracle of our Saviour in feeding the Multitude with five Barley Loaves, and two small Fishes; Verf. 11. and the wonderful Effect it had upon the Minds of the People. For, they who were so averse to our Saviour's Person and Doctrine before, when they had seen the Miracle that Jesus did, said, *This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the World.* 14. So powerful are the Arguments that sute with the present Interests of Men! And they were not contented now to take him for a Prophet, but they would by all means make him a King. For this was indeed a King to their Mind, who could feed 15. an Army with a few Loaves, and make War without Taxes. But our Saviour understood their Temper and their Motives, and therefore presently withdrew from them, and departed again into a Mountain himself 25. alone. This inflamed them so much the more; and they cross over the Lake of Tiberias, and find him on the other side: Then, our Blessed Saviour takes the opportunity to discover to them the mean Inducements

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they had to follow him so close; not for any real Esteem they had of his Doctrine or Miracles, but for the satisfaction of their sensual Appetites, *Ye seek me not because ye saw the Miracles, but because ye did eat of the Loaves and were filled.* Which shews what a poor and low kind of Happiness they were so fond of: But he endeavours to raise their Minds higher, that they might look after something worth their Pains. *Labour not for the Meat which perisheth, but for the Meat which endureth to Everlasting Life; which the Son of Man shall give unto you.* This was Excellent Advice; but they had no Sense of any thing but present Enjoyment; and therefore when he enlarges his Discourse about the *Bread of Life that came down from Heaven; and that he was the living Bread, and if any Man eat of this Bread he shall live for ever;* they would by no means understand him: For they knew not what to make of such kind of Spiritual Food. But when they found all his Discourse tending that way: They first murmured saying, *This is a hard saying, who can hear it?* And when they perceived that he went on, many of those who had been his Disciples before went off; for it is said, *From that time many of his Disciples went back and walked no more with him.* So hard it is, even for the better sort of Mankind to have a true Sense of the Happiness of another World; and of the Means that lead to it! But when he took notice of so many leaving him, he saith to his Twelve Disciples, *Will ye also go away?* Upon which St. Peter answers in the Name of the rest, *Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of Eternal Life.* As though he had said, we have not followed thee for the sake of any Happiness in this World; and for our Expectation of another it depends upon thy Word, and we are well assured, Thou neither canst nor wilt deceive us in this Matter, *For thou hast the Words of Eternal Life; and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.*

In the Words of the Text are two things implied.

1. That the Happiness which Christ hath promised to his Disciples, lies not in the Compass of this World; but in *Eternal Life.*

2. That Christ alone hath discover'd the true and certain way to attain it; *Thou hast the Words of Eternal Life.*

As to the former, there are these things to be enquired into, which are of so great Importance as to deserve our most serious Consideration.

I. Whether Mankind be capable of such a thing as a real Happiness?

II. Whether supposing it possible, it cannot be attained by something in this World?

III. How it appears that Mankind are so framed, as to be capable of Happiness in another World?

I. Whether Mankind be capable of any such thing as a real Happiness? For when we reflect upon the Follies and Passions, and Weaknesses of Human Nature, the Talk of such a solid and consistent State, as that of Happiness seems to be very unsuitable to it; and looks like an Amusement, or a fine Idea, which thinking Men entertain themselves with Speculations about; but that there neither is nor can be any thing like it in the World, as one would judge by a View of Mankind, as to their several Methods of pursuing it. If we look upon the generality of Mankind, we find them toiling and *labouring for the Meat which perisheth;*



*riseth*; taking continual pains about the things of this World; and hardly think of another, but when they cannot think with any pleasure of this. For they are taken up with cares about the Necessaries of Life, how to get Food and Raiment, and other Conveniencies for themselves and their Families; and their Thoughts seldom go any farther. Only at some times when they meet with Crosses and Disappointments they are contented to think of another World, because they are weary of this; and hope to be at ease from the Troubles and Vexations they meet with here. But they are told, that there is no hopes of going to Heaven without some preparation for it here; and therefore they think it necessary to shew some regard to Religion and the Service of God at some times, and in a careless manner, without any hearty Love to God, or his true inward Worship; for, their Hearts are taken up at the same time with the Business of this World; which keeps possession of their Souls, when their Bodies seem to be imployed about the Service of God. And the best part of their Religion, I fear, goes no farther than at some times to attend the Worship of God, and *to draw nigh to him with their Lips, when their Hearts are far from him.* And as God describes them in the Prophet Ezekiel, *And they come unto thee as the People cometh; and they sit before thee, as my People, and they hear thy Words but they will not do them; for with their Mouth they shew much Love, but their Heart goeth after their Covetousness.* This is the right Description of the Generality of those who make some shew of Religion. They have some outward shew and appearance of Religion, but they have none within; however they sit, as if they had a mind to learn something that concerned them; yet *their Heart goeth after their Covetousness*, they mind Religion no more than to be civil to it; (and I wish all were so) for too many are rude and profane, and shew no Reverence at all, either to God or his Service. But if God alone be the real Foundation of our Happiness (as will be made to appear afterward) they who are Enemies to God must be the greatest Enemies to their own Welfare; and they who do only serve him formally and hypocritically can never lay the Foundation aright for Peace with God, or with their own Minds, without which there can be no such thing as any real Happiness, which must suppose such an inward satisfaction as arises from the Favour of God in whom our Happiness consists.

But if Men give way to their Passions and Inclinations as to the things of this World, it is impossible there should be any such thing as Happiness in Mankind. For the least that is implied in that is a quiet, sedate and pleasant Enjoyment of ones self; but where there are any violent and unruly Passions which discompose and unsettle the mind; to talk of Happiness in such a state is like talking of a Calm at Sea in the Midst of Storms and Tempests. All must be composed and quiet within before there can be any pretence to a happy Condition. It is possible that there may be inward Tranquillity, when the Winds blow without; but there can be nothing like it, where the Mind is uneasie and discomposed; and apt to be disturbed by any sudden Accident. So that if there be no effectual way to subdue irregular Passions, and to bring our Souls into an even and composed Temper, without the Rage of Lust, and Anger, and the tormenting Passions of Envy, Hatred, Malice and Revenge, it is as vain a thing to discourse of such a thing as Happiness, as to preach of Peace and Tranquillity among Wolves and Tigres.

Neither is it enough to make Mankind happy, to suppose that at sometimes they are in much better Temper than others; for Happiness is a settled and constant state; not exposed to great and sudden Changes, but one uniform and uninterrupted Enjoyment of the greatest good. For less than that cannot make us entirely happy; and no such condition is to be expected in that uncertain and imperfect state, which even the best are in, in this World.

But it may be said, *That then the most happy people in this World are those who live at Ease, and enjoy themselves in the Pleasures and Vanities of this Life; and give themselves as little Disturbance, as may be in the Enjoyment of them.*

The plain meaning of this is, that such is the Folly and Weakness of Mankind, that they are the most happy that are most deceived: like Men that sleep in a Storm; or sing and dance in the midst of a Tempest. If all that Men had to do in this World were only to pass through it as easily as they could, a great deal might be said for a soft and voluptuous Life: For then it would be no such Absurdity to say, *Let us eat and drink for to morrow we die.* But this is far from being our case. For we are only in a passage to a Future and Eternal State of Happiness or Misery; and our Condition for ever depends upon our present Care; and therefore we are bound to watch with our utmost Diligence, lest we miscarry in our Passage, and so be for ever miserable. We are not like Passengers in a Ship, which is managed by skilful Pilots, who may play and divert themselves, or lie down and sleep, and yet may come safe enough to their Haven; but we are to go up the Stream against a torrent of violent Passions, and must tug hard at the Oar our selves least we be cast backward, or be dashed in pieces against the Rocks, or be swallowed up in the Quick-sands; therefore we must have a mighty care of being deceived, lest it prove our Ruin.

*But do we not find that Imagination goes a great way as to the Happiness or Misery of humane Life? Do not many make their Miseries greater by their own Fancies? And others make their Condition much easier, by false Notions and Ideas of their own Happiness? Therefore it seems that Men's Happiness or Misery depends on their Fancy.* It cannot be denied that a great deal of the Comfort or Uneasiness of Living depends upon Imagination. Of which we have this plain Evidence, that the same Person under the same Circumstances shall think himself happy or miserable, by the different turn of his Imagination. As, if a Person fixes his Imagination wholly upon the sad and melancholy prospect of humane Affairs, and his own in particular; and represents to himself the possible or the probable Evils of Life, the Diseases his Body is subject to, and the Disorders and Passions of his Mind, the uncertainty of all things here, that he may out-live his Estate, Friends, Children, and be left miserable, alone and unable to help himself, that he may undergo the Calamities of Fire, Sword, Pestilence, which others have suffer'd so much by; let any Man but indulge his Fancy in such a dreadful Scene and Prospect of things, can you possibly think such a Man can be happy in himself, although setting aside this Power of Imagination, his Condition may to outward Appearance seem easie in the World, and is so to himself when the Clouds and Vapours are dispersed, which disturbed his Imagination before. But if a Man under the same Condition may have such different Apprehensions, that shews what the Power of Imagination is as to the Happiness and Misery of Life.

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For those who have uneasy Apprehensions under better Circumstances are farther from Happiness here, than those who are under worse, and think their Condition better. But he that thinks himself miserable goes a great way towards making himself so; and no Man can be happy, let his outward Condition be what it will, if he will not think himself so; for an uneasy Mind is inconsistent with a state of Happiness. And that Person who would make his Condition tolerable in this World, must take off his Mind from the Fears of Evils which may never happen, and submit to the Wisdom of Providence in what do befall him; and entertain himself with those Comforts of Life, which Providence hath bestow'd upon him at present, and depend upon that for the future, and herein lies the greatest part of the Wisdom of Living, and of that Happiness we can enjoy here.

On the other side, it cannot be denied, that Men may fancy to themselves a great deal more of Happiness, in the Vanities and Pleasures and Enjoyments of the World, than really there is: For their Imaginations may strangely heighten and improve all things that please them; and while they are thus pleased they think themselves happy. If any say they are deceived; grant it, say they, yet it is better to be deceived this way than the other; if all Mankind live as in a Dream, yet it is better to have pleasant than frightful Dreams; and they are not such Fools as those who make themselves miserable by dreadful Apprehensions of things that may never happen; and if they do are made double by Anticipation.

But is it necessary for Mankind to be under such a mistake by Imagination one way or other? If so, I grant it is better to be pleasantly deceived. But this doth not come up to the true case of Mankind. For it is really Men's Interest not to be deceived; and they do not think those happy, who think themselves so through the power of a disordered Fancy. As is plain in those whose Reason is disturbed, and yet may please themselves with the Imagination of being Kings and Princes, and having all people pay their Homage to them. But none that are their true Friends, but think themselves bound to bring them out of these pleasant Imaginations to their true Judgment of things; although it be with very severe Discipline, and hard Usage, and long Courses of unpleasing Remedies. Is this a true and real Kindness to such persons, or not? If it be, as none in their right Senses will deny it, then the Happiness of Imagination only is not the proper Happiness of Mankind: For such persons who were much pleased with themselves before, may grow much more uneasy and sensible of the Evils of Life afterwards.

What then is to be done in the case of Mankind, as to Happiness or Misery? The first thing is to consider whether there be in them any Principle above Imagination? For, if there be, we must judge of Happiness according to the highest Faculty, and not according to the other. As we judge of the Perfection of Plants not by a meer Mass of Matter, which is in Earth and Stones, but by the Principle of Vegetation, which is a sort of Life to them; and the flourishing of it lies in the Conveyance of the Sap from the Root upwards to the several Branches, and in the spreading and growth of them with the Leaves, and the Flowers and Seed belonging to them. The Perfection of Animals doth not lie in what they have in common with Plants, but in that Sense and Motion which is proper to them. Mankind are still of a higher Rank,  
and

and have not only Sense and Motion, but Reason and Understanding, whereby they are capable of judging of Good and Evil; not meerly as Brutes do, by what is at present agreeable to their Senses; but by what is fitting for such to do, who have such a Faculty to govern themselves by; and will bear Reflection.

There is no doubt in Mankind a Pleasure of Sense; because the outward Objects do make such Impressions on our Organs as do raise an Idea in our Imagination of something delightful: Now the main point is, whether we are to govern our selves by such things as appear pleasant to us from our Senses; as our tasting Meats and Drinks, our hearing melodious Sounds, our seeing beautiful and tempting Objects; or whether there be not something above these pleasant Ideas from our Senses, which we are to govern our selves by: We all find in our selves a power to conceive far more noble Objects than such as make Impressions on our Senses; we can raise our Thoughts above this visible World, and by the things which are made we cannot but be convinced, that there must be an Infinite Being which made them, and put them into that Order and Usefulness wherein we see them. And if this Principle be fixed in our Minds, that there is such an Infinite Being, which created all things, and gave us our Beings; the next thing which our Reason suggests to us is, that it must be our chief Interest to please him, because both his Power and Goodness are infinite. And if it be so fitting for us to please him, who by his Power and Goodness is most capable to make us happy or miserable; then it is reasonable to suppose that he hath some way or other directed us to find out what is pleasing to him. And we cannot but apprehend by what we call Reason, that to fear and love and serve him who is our Creatour and Benefactour, is one of the most becoming and necessary Duties of Creatures; and consequently to depend entirely upon his Providence as to our Condition here; to be thankful to him for the Blessings we receive, and to pray to him for what we want. These, which are the Fundamental Duties of Religion, are the natural Results of our Reason and Consideration. And then it follows, that so wise and good a Being should set the just Bounds to our Duties as to this World, that we should not prefer them before him, who is so infinitely above them; that we should not pursue them as our End, but make use of them as Means to a farther End, and with that Temper and Moderation which suits most with the Nature and Design of them: and that we should not bear Ill-will to those of the same Condition with our selves, but that we should be just in our Dealings, sober in our Behaviour, kind to our Neighbours, and charitable to those who are in Want and Necessity.

These are some of the general things which our Faculty of Understanding suggests to us, with respect to God and our selves. And now we are to consider whether our Happiness or Misery consists in the Pleasures of Imagination which come from our Senses, which we have in common with Brutes, or in those of our Thoughts which are so much above them? The Perfection of other things we see lies in that which is the best part of them; and why should it be otherwise with Mankind, when their Faculties are so much more excellent? This was never denied, by any that reflected on Human Nature, and were called Philosophers; for they still granted, that the proper Happiness of Mankind must consist in what was best in them; and the true notion of Happiness was to be taken from what was most agreeable thereto; which some called

called Vertue and others Pleasure; not Brutish and Sensual, but Intellectual and Contemplative. And those who seem'd to sink it lower, were ashamed of their Doctrine, and sought to palliate it in such a manner, as made it inconsistent with it self, or with Human Nature.

If we grant Happiness to consist in being ever pleas'd; then, we are to judge of our Happiness by that which is most apt to create a more lasting Pleasure; and we cannot but find Sensual Pleasures to be short, uncertain, and leaving no Satisfaction to the Mind after them; but on the contrary, the Pleasures of the Mind and of a good Conscience are of an abiding Nature and always grateful; and have no such Stings, and bitter Remorses after them as the violent pursuit of Sensual Pleasures do leave behind them. From whence it follows, that the true and proper Happiness of Mankind doth not consist in an *Imaginary Good*, which depends on the Impressions of our Senses; but in a *Real and Intellectual Good*, which is apt to satisfy our Minds, and give a lasting pleasure to them.

II. The next thing to be considered is, Whether there be any true Happiness to be attained by any thing within the compass of this World? And all that we can conceive here must be either *Natural*; or *Moral*, or *Civil*, or *Political Happiness*.

1. A *Natural Happiness* consists in having all things agreeable to the Frame and Constitution of our Beings; in a healthful Body, a competent Subsistence, and ease and tranquillity of Mind: For these things agree to the Natural Frame of which we are made; which supposes Life and the Means to preserve it.

We cannot suppose any such thing as Happiness in such a broken and disorder'd Temper of Body and Mind, as Mankind are continually subject to in this World: For a weak and infirm Body, which labours under or is still liable to Pains and Diseases, which by our utmost care we can neither prevent nor remove, was never intended for a Foundation of a happy state of Life; and where there is neither Health nor Ease, all other Comforts of Life lose their Relish, and Men are apt to grow weary of living, and they look on it rather as a Burden to be born than as a Pleasure to be enjoyed. Here I confess the Mind comes in to the Relief of the Body, and by Reason and Consideration a Man may be brought to Patience and Submission to the Will of God; but that is another thing from Happiness, which is a matter of Choice and Delight. I have often wondred at those Philosophers, who could ever hope to make Mankind to think themselves happy by their state of *Indolency* or freedom from Pain; not that they thought they could secure Men from it; but promis'd to teach Men one of the hardest things in the World, which was to think themselves happy under the greatest Torments. If they had said only that Men ought to bear Pains of Body as becomes them, with Resolution and Constancy and inward Patience, this had been no more than what is agreeable to the common Reason of Mankind; but for any to think to alter the Impressions made by our Senses of Pleasure and Pain with a Sett of Words and Phrases, shews the great Folly of such who pretend to teach others Wisdom. There are many great and wise Arguments why we ought to bear what God thinks fit to lay upon us, but to think my self at Ease when I feel Pain, and Happy when I am as Miserable as a Rack can make me, is so contrary to the common Sense of Mankind, that they might

might as well have persuaded Men that they had no Senses; but they were deceived with false Ideas, and that there was really no such thing as pain at all; but onely a strange Imagination Mankind had taken up about it; and that there was really nothing but matter and motion in the World; and that no one could tell what either *Pain* or *Pleasure* meant.

Rom. 5. 3. It is true, that the Scripture speaks of *Rejoycing in Tribulations*;  
 1 Pet. 3. and *accounting our selves happy when we suffer for Righteousness sake*; but  
 14 that is not with respect to present Sense, but from the Expectation of a  
 4. 13. future Recompence. And when it speaks of a state of Happiness, it supposes the Body to be wonderfully altered from what it is now. The Principle of Life then will not be such as it is now, which stands in so much need of continual Repairs; but a far nobler Flame will then enliven and quicken the Body, and not only preserve it from Corruption, but from all that burden and uneasiness which *Flesh and Blood* here labour so much under. For then *Mortality shall be swallowed up of Life.*

a Cor. 5. 4.

But are our Souls more capable of a Natural Happiness here, than our Bodies? If they are, it must either lie in the *Clearness of our Perceptions*, or the *Tranquillity of our Minds*; and in neither of these can we expect to be happy in this World. How short are the greatest Discoveries of the most Inquisitive Men into the Nature of things? For our Faculties are short and narrow; our Light uncertain; our Ideas obscure and imperfect; our Opinions ill grounded; our Fancies often deceived, and our Reason too much under the Influence of them. And then, as to *Natural Tranquillity of Mind*, what can be further from it, when the Passions are so Predominant, and Reason hath so little Power over them? And when they are so many, so cross, so impetuous, so head-strong; and have gotten so great a Head before Reason can take upon it to govern them? And when the best and most experienced find it hard enough to keep them in order; and some which have seemed to lie quiet a long time of a sudden start up and give very great Disturbance where they cannot overcome. But this leads to the next:

2. A *Moral Happiness*; which lies in the Exercise of Moral Vertue, or the governing our Passions according to Reason. This seems very possible, because all Men are convinced that it is a very reasonable thing; but when they come to the practise, they find it not so easie as it is reasonable. For our Passions are founded in our Natures, heighten'd by Custom, inflamed by frequent Occasions, and judged useful in many cases, and therefore it is a necessary part of Wisdom and Goodness to keep them in their due order. To think of total subduing them is a vain thing, since they have so deep a Root in our Natures, and are as so many different modes of Pleasure and Pain arising from the various Considerations of Good and Evil as they are offered to us. If it be a great and surprizing Good which appears to us, it raises *Admiration and Esteem*; if it appears small and common it begets *Contempt*; whatever upon Consideration seems Good in us excites in us *Love*, and *Desire*, and *Joy*; if *Evil*, then we feel the Passions of *Hatred*, *Aversion* and *Sadness*. If it be Mischief intended or acted, then we have the Passions of *Anger* and *Revenge*; if it be mischief fallen upon others who have not deserv'd it, then we find that which we call *Pity* or *Commiseration*. Now to talk of rooting out these Passions is all one as to take away the Impressions of Good and Evil upon us, since these do arise from them;  
 and

and are as the different Motions within us according to our different Apprehensions of them. And without these, we can neither *Love*, nor *Desire*, nor *Rejoyce* in what is *Good*; nor *Hate* and be grieved at what is *Evil*; and so we cannot do our Duty without them, nor have that Pleasure and Satisfaction which follows it. But then we are to consider, that many things appear *Good* which are not; and those which are *Good* in some respects are not so in all; and therefore we are very apt to err both in the *Object* and *Measures* of our Passions: But in the due Government of them as to these things, lies the true Exercise of *Vertue*; and if we can attain to a perfect Government of our Passions according to Reason that is true *Moral Happiness*; if we cannot, we must fall short of it.

There have been those who have pretended to a Skill of attaining to a perfect Tranquillity by a total subduing their Passions; but the World never believed it of them; nor did they find it in themselves, as appeared by the Tragical Ends of two of the greatest pretenders that way; I mean *Cato* and *Brutus*; who would never have ended their Lives as they did, if they had wholly conquered their Passions, and thought themselves happy under Calamities. But the greatest part of Mankind are so far from pretending to conquer their Passions, that they take the greatest pains to dissemble and conceal them; when they are carried to such Objects as they think would bring Shame and Contempt to them: Which shews that it is not *Vertue* but *Esteem* which they aim at; and would, (to preserve the Value they have for themselves) as much as may be, hide them from their own view; by avoiding Self-reflection as much as they can; and would fain look on themselves through the flattering Glasses which others are too ready to hold to them.

It cannot be deny'd, that the Ancient *Moralists* have given excellent Rules for the Rectifying our Opinions of the Good and Evil of this World, and for keeping our Passions in due order; but when they had done their best, they confessed, that such a wise Man as they described was a Prodigy, hardly one in an Age to be found that acted according to their Rules; and therefore they must confess, that such a Happiness was not to be attained by Mankind. But although they failed as to the main of their Design; yet they made very useful Discoveries for the Benefit of others; As,

1. That the Practice of *Virtue* was more desirable than the Pursuit after Riches, and Honour, and Pleasure. They saw how deeply the World was engaged in the Prosecution of those things, and how little those were regarded who did not mind them, and were thought Men of mean and shallow Capacities, who understood their own Interest no better. But all this did not discourage such as set up for the Practice of *Virtue*, as a far more Noble Design. When Men began to be inquisitive into things, some spent their time and thoughts in the searching of the natural Causes of things; but others soon found the defect of humane Understandings as to those matters, and therefore applied themselves to matters of *Morality*, *i. e.* to what was *Good* and *Evil*, *Just* and *Unjust*, what became Men with respect to *God* and to one another; and in the Practice of those things that were good and just, and virtuous, and religious; they said that the greatest Happiness of Mankind did consist. And this was the chief Doctrine of the School of *Pythagoras*, as appears by the Fragments still extant of the *Pythagoreans*. Their Notion was, that the true Happiness of Mankind lay in a Similitude to

God, and the best thing wherein we could resemble God was Virtue and Goodness; and that the Souls of the best Men went to Heaven, and there enjoyed Familiarity with God and the most Excellent Minds. And those of that School, who made Laws for their Countries, as *Charondas* and *Zaleucus*, did with great Earnestness recommend the Practice of Virtue to their People, *As that which brings them nearer to God, and made them most easie to themselves.* When Men come to die, saith *Zaleucus*, they wish they had lived more virtuous Lives, and repent of the Injuries they have done to others. But the first Disciples of *Pythagoras*, who endeavour'd to promote Virtue, met with very hard Usage in their Cities; for some of them were burnt or destroyed together in a House; others were dispersed and banished, and *Pythagoras* himself, some think, suffer'd with them; others, that he died soon after with grief to see so good a Design miscarry. But this did not discourage *Socrates* from attempting the same at *Athens*; although it cost him his Life. It is a Noble Expression of his in *Xenophon*, (an Excellent Disciple of his) *It was always my Opinion, saith he, that those live best who are the best Men, and that there is no pleasure like that of finding ones self to grow better.* So true a Sense had he of the Happiness that follows the pursuit of Virtue, above Riches and the Greatness of this World, which *Socrates* was a great Despisers of.

*Stob. Ecl. Ethic.*

*Xenoph. l. 4. c. 8. n. 6.*

2. That although they could not attain to a complete Moral Happiness, yet they helped Men very much as to the lessening the Troubles of humane Life; and so found out a sort of comparative Happiness with respect to the rest of Mankind. As it happens to those who pursue the Philosopher's Stone; although they miss of their main Design, yet they find out several useful Experiments for the Benefit of humane Life. And those are very good Medicines which abate Pain, and abate the Violence of a Disease, although they do not perfectly cure it: So if moral Arguments will prevent the Extravagancy and Violence of Passions they do great Service to Mankind, although they cannot wholly subdue our Passions. And a good Man is careful to keep himself within the Bounds of Discretion, and a due Temper of mind suitable to his Condition; and with great Resignation to the wise Providence of God in his hardest Condition. And he that lives in such an evenness of Temper is happy in comparison of such who are furious in their Passions; unreasonable in their Desires; impatient under Crosses, and making them double by bearing them so ill. So that all the Prospect we have as to any thing like Happiness in this World lies in Meekness, Patience, Charity and Universal Goodness. All other things are either vanities and trifles, and foolish Designs; or else tend to Mischief and Sorrow and both Torment in this World, and that to come.

*Pomponat. de Immort.*

3. But there have been some in the World, who have look'd on all the Discourses of the Happiness of Mankind either here or hereafter, as vain and empty Dreams and Fancies of Speculative Men; but when they have been asked, whether there were no kind of Happiness belonging to Mankind; they answered, not singly but in common; as they are Parts of the same Body, and Happiness is to be taken with respect to that, and not to every Individual: As in the parts of a Man's Body some are more noble and useful than others, but the Welfare of it lies in the Union and Conjunction of all together. So that all the Happiness they allow to Mankind is only *Civil and Political.*



We do not deny that Men's Condition in this World. would be much better, if all Men pursued the common Good; but if there be no Happiness to be expected till then, I am afraid we are never like to find it in this World. For *Self-love* is the prevailing Passion in the World; and *Self-interest* the chief Design they carry on in it; however they cover it over with more popular Pretences. For *Self-love* being discovered raises hatred and contempt in others; and therefore the more artificial Men keep it up as a secret, although it happen here, as it often doth in other cases, that the truest Reasons of things make the least shew, and are most seldom talked of. For he that is known to make himself his End, provokes others to lay him more open, and expose him to the Contempt of others; and so he may love himself without a Rival; for he that is only a Friend to himself is look'd on as a common Enemy.

We do therefore freely allow that the pursuit of a common Good is the best way to the Happiness of Society; and the Reasons of Good and Evil with respect to Mankind, is to be taken from thence; and therefore not only Murder, and Adultery, and Theft, are Evil, because repugnant to a common Interest; but Envy, Hatred, Malice, Injustice, Back-biting, Strife and Division are so too; but the common Good is promoted by Good-will, Mercy, Charity, and an Universal Principle of doing good to others. If we could ever hope to find this World happy, it must be by the Practice of these things, which are so much despised and neglected by the greatest part of Mankind.

But for such as despise Religion and the hopes of another World, to talk of a happy Condition of humane Societies by the Practice of Virtue, is as unreasonable as their Infidelity. For what Obligation can there be on Mankind to pursue a common Interest against their own, as in matters of Fraud and Injustice, if there be no God, nor an account to be given in another World? The hopes of Concealment joined with a prospect of present Advantage will prevail over any other Arguments, but those from Religion and Conscience. It is too true, that even these do not always prevail; but what a case would the World be in, if there were no such things as the Awe of Conscience, and the Fears of another World? If there be no restraint but the Laws of Men, they will have no check upon them but the Fear of Discovery; and what secret Frauds, and Acts of Injustice, and all sorts of Wickedness would Men commit, where they could hope to be concealed? And let Politicians design never so much to keep up the popular Awes of Conscience and Religion; it will be found impossible, where there is any Ground of Suspicion that they are intended only for Tricks of State. For Mankind abhor to be cheated, and therefore none have less real Interest among Mankind than professed Politicians. For they are looked on as the common Deceivers of the World. And if they hope to do any good with the rest of Mankind, they must put on the Appearance of Truth and Sincerity; but if the Mask happen at any time to slip on one side, or to fall off, none are more despised and reproached than they. So that, as there is no such way to be thought sincere as really to be so; so there is no such way to be thought to promote a publick and common Interest, as in earnest to do it; and the Reputation of those who do so will continue much longer than of the subtle Dissemblers and most crafty Politicians. So that it is a weak and ridiculous Conceit of such Men, who hope to promote the Happiness of Mankind, without the Principles of Religion and Virtue.

Thus I have shewed how uncapable Mankind is of Happiness with respect to this World; and therefore it is with great Reason, that the Doctrine of Christ puts off the Hopes of it to another World. *Thou hast the Words of Eternal Life.* But it is not fit to dismiss such a Subject as this, without some Application of it to our selves.

One would think that the Reason and Experience of Mankind had been enough to convince them, that there is no such thing as Happiness to be expected in this World: But if we are to judge of Mankind by their Actions we should conclude, that they expect no other Happiness, but what they can get in this World. For, they are as earnest and violent in the pursuit after the Honours and Riches, and Pleasures of this World, as if they believed there were no other; and it were an Argument of Weakness and Folly to neglect the Advantages of this World in hopes of a better. But there is no answering this *Dilemma*, either those are Fools who believe and hope, and prepare for another World; or those must be so, who mind nothing but this. And on the one side, we have nothing to justify our Fondness of this World, but the vain Opinions and unreasonable Passions, and the general Practice of Mankind; but on the other we have the concurrent Judgment of the wisest persons; the constant Experience of the Deceitfulness of this World; the hopes and desires of the best of Mankind; the Nature and Immortality of our Souls; and above all, the most certain Revelation of the Will of God to direct us; *Thou hast the Words of Eternal Life*; and therefore it must be our true and only Wisdom to look after that.

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# SERMON XLII.

OF THE

## True Happiness

OF

# MANKIND,

AND

## Immortality of the SOUL.

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PART II.

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St. JOHN VI. 68.

*Then Simon Peter said unto him, Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of Eternal Life.*

III. **T**HE next and the great Enquiry to be made is, how it appears that Mankind are capable of such a Happiness as Eternal Life, and that it is God's Design to give it?

This is a Point of the highest Importance; and therefore I must proceed in it with as much Clearness and Evidence as I can.

And the Method I shall take, will be to shew,

I. That there is in Mankind a Capacity of Happiness beyond this World.

II. That by the Gospel of Christ God hath revealed to Mankind the Way and Means to obtain Eternal Life.

I. That there is in Mankind a Capacity of Happiness beyond this World. For without this, the Promise of *Eternal Life* signifies nothing.

But

But before I come to the particular proof of it, some things are to be premised.

1. That the true Happiness of Mankind is of a Spiritual Nature, for all Happiness must be agreeable to the Nature of the Being; but in Mankind it is observable, that those which we call sensitive Pleasures depend upon the Ideas of the Mind: For although they come in by the Means of the Senses, yet the Pleasure arises from within; and it is the Mind which makes the Impression from without to be grateful to us. For there are, properly speaking, no Passions in the Body, but there may be such Motions in and from the Body which may cause a Sense of Pleasure or Pain in the Mind. From whence I observe that the Mind is the true Seat and Source of Pleasure and Happiness proper to Mankind; and so the most suitable and agreeable Happiness must be that of the Mind, which is of a Spiritual Nature; and although it is capable of Ideas of Pleasure and Pain from outward Objects, yet that is occasional with respect to our present State: For, no other good Account can be given of the several Ideas we have from our Senses but that it is the Will of our Creator that upon such different Impressions on our Senses such Ideas should arise within us. But the Soul hath within it self from Reflection on its own Acts the true Ideas of Pleasure and Pain; and is therefore most capable of a Spiritual Happiness which hath its proper Seat in the Soul it self. The Moralists who placed Happiness in Virtue did it upon that Account, because it was *the Perfection of our best Part*; and those who went farthest as to the things of this World being necessary to Happiness, never thought of *Abundance*, but only of the Conveniencies of Life; not that they made Men happy, but that the want of them rendered Men's Condition uneasy as to this World; but the main part of real Happiness they placed in the Excellency of the Mind, and its Improvement in Virtue and Contemplation. Others were of Opinion that Virtue alone would make Men happy under any Circumstances of Life. But this was a hard point, considering our Sense of Pains and Diseases, and other Calamities of Life. Of which hereafter. It is sufficient at present to shew that Men by the bare Light of Reason did find out, that the main Happiness of Mankind must be of a Spiritual Nature.

*Ethic. ad Nicom. 1. 10. c. 7. 9.*

2. That it must be begun in this World, although the Compleatness of it cannot be expected till the next. For although *Eternal Life* be the Happiness promised by the Gospel; and the Life we now lead is very far from it; yet that Promise was made to persons in this State, and on Condition that here they prepare themselves for it, *i. e.* to such as seek for it by a patient continuance in well-doing, as St. Paul expresseth it. To him that overcometh, saith Christ, will I give the Crown of Life. So run that ye may obtain, saith St. Paul, and work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling; with many other places which imply that there is no Happiness to be expected in another State, unless the Foundation of it be laid here. And that in such a manner, as persons are said to become the Children of God; and to be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in Light; and to be partakers of the Divine Nature; being born of God; and renewed in the Spirit of their Minds; without this the Gospel gives no hopes of Eternal Life. For our Saviour who is the Giver and Procurer of it hath said, that *except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God*. So that there is a necessity that *Eternal Life* be begun in this World; not as to Perfection, but as

*Rom. 2. 7.*

*Revel. 2. 7.*

*10. 11.*

*2 Cor. 9.*

*24.*

*Phil. 2. 12.*

*1 Joh. 3. 2.*

*Col. 1. 12.*

*2 Pet. 1. 4.*

*Joh. 1. 13.*

*1 Joh. 5. 1.*

*Eph. 4. 23.*

*Rom. 12. 2.*

*John 3. 3.*

to such Disposition of Mind for it, that is weaned from this World, and values and esteems, and prepares it self for a better. But even as to this World such a temper of Mind far exceeds the Moralists Virtues as to Patience, Tranquillity, due Government of our Passions, and an entire Submission to the Will of God; which it sees far greater Reason for, than those who went only on the Supposition of a general Providence, or a fatal Necessity.

3. That the future state of Happiness doth imply the Immortality of the Soul; *i. e.* not a bare Capacity of subsisting in a State separate from the Body, but that it is of such a Nature, as will not die with the Body. Which is made up of a Combination of Parts of Matter under a particular Configuration, and preserved in a wonderful Manner, by such means as are necessary to hold up Life; but our Bodies are liable to so many Diseases and Accidents destructive to it, that it is rather a Wonder to have it last so long, than to have an End put to it by the Instruments of Death. But when the Principle of Life is gone which held altogether, then a Solution of the former Texture of the Body follows and new ones come in the place of it, by a different Configuration of the Parts of Matter of which it was composed. But it is quite otherwise in the Soul: For if it were made up only of Material Particles how subtle and fine soever they be, they must be united to each other by some common Principle of Life; and therefore they may be capable of Separation from each other, from whence a Dissolution must follow. For nothing Material can remain the same Substance when all the Parts are divided from each other, and are changed by different Textures. But the Soul continues the same Substance, and hath the same Faculties of Understanding and Will, although there be never so great a Change as to outward Objects or inward Qualities. It may not have the same Power of exercising them in a Body disabled by such Diseases as seize upon the Brain and so hinder Sense and Motion; but this doth no more prove that the Soul is not a distinct Substance, than a Candle's not being seen in a dark Lanthorn proves that it cannot shine out of it; or that a Child cannot live out of the Mother's Womb, because it lived so long in it, and could not subsist without the Nourishment receiv'd from her. If we do suppose so close a Union between the Soul and Body as there is, we must suppose them mutually affected with each others Disorders. But this is not inconsistent with the Possibility of subsisting separately, if we can make it appear that it is of a Substance distinct from the Body. It may be said, *That this only proves a Possibility and not a Certainty of the Soul's Immortality. For, how can we tell, but that God may have so ordered it, that the Soul may cease together with Life, although it may have a Capacity of subsisting after Death?*

To this I answer,

1. We have no Reason to suppose, that God will alter the natural Course of Things without great Reason. If we suppose the Soul to be made by God a Substance distinct from the Body, although united to it, having a Capacity of subsisting and acting separately; for what Reason can we suppose an End to be put to the Soul's Continuance, when the Body dies? What need such a Substance at all in Man, since Life might have been preserved without it? And if there were no State after Death, why might not a meer Animal Life have been sufficient for Mankind? But for Persons to suppose that God did give to them Rational Souls distinct from their Bodies, and yet to question their Immortality

tality is to charge Providence with an imperfect Management; *i. e.* to give Souls capable of subsisting after Death, and yet breaking off in the middle; and making them only serve the Body so long as it continues in Life. God's absolute Power is not to be considered in the Course of his Providence.

2. The general Consent of Mankind as to Rewards and Punishments in another Life argues a Natural Apprehension of the Will of God as to the Soul's Continuance after Death. All that is pleaded is, *That we cannot be certain, unless we knew what the Will of God was concerning it.* But how are we to judge of the Will of God in this matter? Is it merely by express and plain Revelation? We have no reason to think so, when the first Revelations in the Books of Scripture do rather suppose than positively assert the Immortality of the Soul. *He that cometh to God, saith the Apostle, must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* How must he believe? What! upon Divine Testimony in Scripture? No, but he takes Believing in a larger Sense for a firm Persuasion of the Mind concerning God and a future State which are the Foundation of all Religion; such as *Abel* and *Enoch* had, of whom he speaks in the Verses before. And this general Persuasion was the true Foundation of Natural Religion, such as obtained among the Patriarchs before the Covenant with *Abraham*. And in his time, *Melchisedeck was the Priest of the most High God*; who had then Places; and Times, and Persons set apart for his Solemn Worship; after his time *Job* was a Person of exemplary Piety, one that feared God and departed from Evil; and that not merely with a respect to this Life. *For what is the Hope of the Hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his Soul?* as *Job* speaks. There was so much less need of any express Revelation of the Will of God in this matter, because Mankind were agreed in it, as one of the main Foundations of Religion; that there were to be Rewards and Punishments in another Life according to the Nature of Men's Actions in this. And there are these remarkable Circumstances concur as to this Consent of Mankind.

(1.) That it is as old as we can trace any Tradition among those who had not the Scriptures. *Plato*, who was of considerable Antiquity himself, saith, *That the Belief of another State was as old as they could find Footsteps of the Memory of Things.* And *Cicero* saith, *The Belief of the Immortality of the Soul was from all Antiquity*: and he saith, *The nearer they were to the beginning of Things, the better they understood their own Original.* This was no Invention of the *Egyptians*, as some have thought, from *Herodotus*: For *Plato* was long among them; but he could find no Beginning of it, either there or any where else.

(2.) That if it had not been founded in Nature and Reason, Mankind could not have been brought to so general a Consent in it. For *Cicero* expressly saith, *That there was a Consent of all Nations, as to the Being of God and Immortality of the Soul.* Now let any one consider, how unwillingly Mankind could be brought to believe so disagreeable a Doctrine to the generality of their Wishes and Inclinations; as that Men's Conditions in another World should be according to the Nature of their Actions in this: For allowing the greatest part of Mankind to be neither very bad nor very good; yet the mistrust Men have of themselves would make their Fears over-balance their Hopes; and so they would be most inclined to believe on the other side: But we read of no Arguments or Disputes about it in the eldest Times; no Arts of Politicians

ans to Insinuate or Recommend it; nor Menaces and Punishments to those who believed it not; from whence we may gather, that there was an anticipation in human Nature concerning it; or such a Presumption as was founded upon the best Authority, without any contradiction from reason.

(3.) That the Poetical Fables being mixed with it, did very much corrupt the ancient Tradition but did not take off the force of it. I confess it was a mighty disadvantage to a truth of so much Importance to be set forth in such a Poetical manner, as was thought Incredible by all considering Men. And some thought to shew their Wit by despising the Fables of the Poets concerning another World; as *Cato* observed of *Cæsar* in his Speech in the Senate; but others far better distinguished between the Poetical Fictions and the Ancient Doctrine contained under it; and those who asserted this, with Scorn and Contempt rejected the other. The reason of the mixture of Poetry was, because all the Instructions among the *Greeks*, before the time of *Pherecydes*, were in Verse; and therefore some say, he was the first who asserted the Immortality of the Soul; *i. e.* as a Philosopher, being the first who wrote his Sense of these matters not in a Poetical manner; for otherwise neither he nor *Thales*, could be said to begin a Doctrine of so great Antiquity before them.

*Sallust Catil.*

*Tusc. 1. 8. pro Cluent. Senec. Ep. 24. Plut. de audiend. Poet.*

(4.) That the best and wisest Philosophers have agreed with the generality of Mankind in the Belief of the Soul's Immortality. This was that, as *St. Augustin* observes, which first put the *Greeks* upon Philosophy, as the way to a future Happiness; for, that was the first notion of it among them from *Pythagoras* who gave them the Name: And his Scholars *Epicharmus* and *Empedocles* speak plainly of the Happiness above, which the Souls of good Men enjoy after Death. *Cicero* saith, *That Socrates never doubted of the Soul's Immortality, nor of the Happiness of good Men after Death*; and that when he came to die, he did not speak like one that was driven to it, but as one that was going up to Heaven. And therefore *Plato* called Philosophy a Meditation of Death; being a drawing the Soul off from the Body and preparing it for a better state. *Alcinous* saith, *That Plato's Doctrine was, that the Happiness of Mankind lies not here, but in the Contemplation of God in the State above*;

*Aug. Epist. ad Volus. 3.*

*Grot. Excerpt p 483. Clem. Alex. Str. 5. Lælius c 4. Tusc. 1. 29.*

*Plat. de leg. 10. Alcinous Mag. c. 27.*

(5.) That those who doubted most of the Soul's Immortality, yet confessed, that there was nothing like a Demonstration against it. This is acknowledged by *Galen* after he had endeavoured to show how far the Mind follows the Temper of the Body. And even *Pomponatius* himself grants, *That if there be no sufficient Natural Reasons to prove the Soul Immortal, much less are there any to prove it Mortal*. So that those who took a Pride in opposing the common Sense of Mankind about these matters, yet never pretended to Evidence or Demonstration on their side. Whatever *Aristotle's* Opinion was as to the Immortality of the Soul which animates the Body; yet he is far enough from asserting the Mind in us to be a material Principle uncapable of subsisting in a separate state; for he makes it to be a *Divine and Impassible Substance in it self*; and that its Happiness consists in Intellectual Pleasures; wherein he agrees with *Plato*, although at other times he loved to oppose him.

*Galen T. 5. p. 446, 301, 370. Pompon. de Immort. An. c. 5.*

*De Animal. I. c. 5. III. c. 5. De Part. Anim. I. 1. IV. 10.*

*De Gen. Anim. II. 3. Ethic. X. 7, 8, 9.*

Sen. Ep.  
102.  
Ep. 54.

Seneca seems to have been the most irresolved in this matter, and can hardly be excused from Self-contradiction. Sometimes he seems as well assured of the Soul's Immortality as a man could be without Revelation; at another time he talks of *Extinction*, or *Dissolution*, or *Dissipation*, or he knew not what; as *Antoninus* likewise doth. But the *Stoicks* in general thought the Soul capable of subsisting at least to the Conflagration of the World; and the then several Sparks would be lost in the common Fire.

Nat. Hist.  
VII. 55.

So that as to the old World we have a general Consent from all Antiquity, justified by the best and wisest Men in all Ages; and although it met with some Doubts and Opposition, yet none could so much as pretend to Demonstration against it. *Pliny* without any Reason, attributes the Belief of Immortality only to the *Vanity of Mankind*; who desire to live always and therefore hope they shall do so. But if this were a meer piece of Vanity in Mankind, it would never have taken hold of the best and wisest Men; but only of those of weaker Capacities, who are most apt to be transported with vain Imaginations. And the Vanity of Mankind is apt to run out in matters of Pomp and Ostentation as to this World (even after their Death) but to impute the hopes of Immortality in a future state to no better reason, shews how much a Man of wit may befool himself when he sets himself to oppose the common sense of Mankind. How little had he ever considered the Nature of the Soul, who thought it impossible for it to subsist without the Body? Or of the vast Extent of another World, who could think that there would not be room enough for Souls there? What Argument is it that no part of Mankind can survive after Death, because other Creatures which outlive Man yet totally decay at last? Have they such Souls that can reason, and understand, and remember, and will as men's do? His *antegenitale experimentum*, that is, *that we shall be as we had been before we were born*; proves nothing, unless God cannot give a Being to an Immaterial Substance incapable of Dissolution. It is easie to say, *That we shall be, as if we had never been*; but how is it proved, when we have Reason and Authority on the other side?

Acosta, l. 5.  
c. 7, 8.  
Harios. P.  
26.  
Del Techo  
Hist. Para-  
quar. l. 2. 26. 3. 12. 5. 23.  
gard de Hirou, l. 1. 18.

(6.) We have the general consent of that part of Mankind, which was not known to the Ancients, but have been discovered in these last Ages. And that not from common rumours or uncertain Authors, but from those who have lived and conversed most among the Natives, both of the *East and West Indies*; in *Peru*, *Mexico*, *Virginia*, *Paraguaria*, *Tucumania*, the *Antilles*, *Brasilians*, and others.

*Terre d' Antilles*, T. 2 372. *Rocheport*, T. 2. p. 310. *Lerius de Brasil*, c. 16. *Surgard de Hirou*, l. 1. 18.

Now let any one consider seriously from whence such a consent should come among so many Nations, so Rude and Barbarous, so far from joining in any common Interest, or so much as having one common Language? How could the same notions as to Rewards and Punishments in another Life be communicated from one to another, and be so Universally spread among them? I do not say, that they have just the same Apprehensions as to the Nature of Rewards and Punishments after this Life; but that they have the same general sense of them.

And



And the same holds as to the *East-Indies* from those who have been most conversant among them too; who agree likewise in this common Sentiment, *That Men's Condition in another World will be according to the Nature and Proportion of their good or evil Actions here.*

*Abr. Rogers de Bramins Part II. ch. 7. p. 192. 367. Thevenoz. 1. ch. 5.*

38 *Schouven. p. 141. Hist. de Siam Part III. Tachard. VI. Knox of Ceylon Part III.*

And this is the point of common Consent, which I insist upon as an Evidence, that God hath by the Voice of Nature declared to Mankind his Will concerning the Immortality of Souls; which he hath more expressly declared by the Gospel. Of which hereafter.

Having now premised these things, to prevent some Difficulties and Objections, I proceed to the direct Proofs of the Soul's Capacity of such a Spiritual Happiness from such things; which all persons may find within themselves, which shew the Soul to be a Spiritual or Immaterial Substance; and those are,

1. From Spiritual Apprehensions and Judgment of Things or the proper Acts of our Minds.

2. From Spiritual Inclinations or the Dispositions of our Wills.

1. From Spiritual Apprehensions or the Nature of our Thoughts: By Spiritual Apprehensions I do not mean such as are said to be Spiritual in regard of their Quality or Disposition of the Mind which they flow from; but in regard of their distinction from Acts of the Body, or what arises from material Causes. If we can make it appear that there are any such Acts of the Soul which do not arise from, nor depend upon matter, *Pomponatius* denies not but the Proof will be good as to the *Immateriality* and *Immortality* of it. Now the first thing I would offer to try it by, is this very point, whether there be any such Immaterial Operation in our Minds or not. Here the Object is plainly immaterial; *i. e.* a Spiritual Substance consider'd in it self, which can understand, and will, and move the Body; and there is nothing repugnant to any Principle of Reason in such a Notion; and the Question is, whether what we find in our selves as to these Acts, do prove such a Spiritual Substance in us or not? I do not now go upon the Acts themselves, but upon the debate whether these Acts do prove the Soul to be immaterial. And I say, that the forming and carrying on such a Debate in our Minds, doth not and cannot arise from a material Principle. For how can such a Principle form in our Minds the Notion of an immaterial Substance, and make Arguments, and compare them as to the Properties of both what is material, and what not? For there must be a Capacity of perceiving the difference, and of passing a Judgment upon a distinct Time, and comparing their distinct Properties: Now, this I say, that a Principle purely material can never do. For how should Matter conceive of what is not Matter? We may easier imagine that Earth and Stone may judge of Plants; that Trees may apprehend the different manners of Sensation; or that Beasts may be taught Mathematicks; than that what is purely material may judge of an immaterial Substance. For that is more out of the reach of it, than Sense is above Plants, or Plants above Earth and Stones: Since in those cases there are only different modifications of Matter; but here there is a total difference, as to the very Nature of things. The parts of Matter are, we see, capable of great varieties as to Life, Sense and Motion; but still they are but parts of the same uniform Matter in different Modes: Let them be never so fine and subtle, they are no less material than the grossest Compositions.

*Pomponat. de Immort. Ani. c. 9.*

But some Men are very apt to be imposed upon in this point, and think, that the fineness and subtilty of the parts of Matter may be so different from others, as to be more capable of intellectual Perception; because we find some Organized parts of Matter made capable of Sensation, which others are not. We cannot deny that God doth so fit the parts of Matter in sensitive Beings, that they are capable of Impressions from outward Objects, and that those do raise such Ideas in what we call Imagination, as to determine Motion in them according as they are represented pleasant or hurtful to them. That we have such a Principle as Imagination in us common with inferiour Creatures, is evident by the Impressions, which material Objects make upon us, both asleep and awake; in our Sleep our Dreams result from the Impressions on our Fancies; and when we are awake, we find the perpetual Rovings of Imagination, if our Reason do not govern them and keep them in order; in so much, that if Men did but for one half hour express all the wandering and incoherent Fancies in their Heads, they would be taken for mad-men; so that there must be allow'd in all persons in their Wits something above Imagination, which as to matter of Speech we call Discretion; and as to our inward Judgment we call *Reason*. But whatever Name we give it, it is something which is able to correct and govern Imagination; and that not meerly by present Sense of Pleasure and Pain, but by higher Considerations; and from a Prospect of things wholly out of the reach of our Senses. Now this is that immaterial Principle within us, which is able to perceive and judge of things above the power of Matter, and concerning it self whether it be immaterial or not; which nothing that is material could ever do. For although we find the Impressions of Imagination to be strong and violent, yet we do not find them capable of consistence or true methods of Reasoning; and therein the main difference consists between the Power of Imagination, and that immaterial Principle we call Reason. So that to judge whether our Souls be immaterial Substances or not, these things are necessary.

1. We must understand what an immaterial Substance is, and wherein the difference lies between that, and a material Substance, without this there can be no judging; and how is it possible to find out the difference if it be only material? For nothing can act beyond it self; and therefore a material Substance can have no Notion of an Immaterial. For although Perception by Sense might be extended to the perceiving it self to perceive, yet it can never go so far, as to compare its own Perception with that of a Being above it self; therefore that which compares material and immaterial Substances together in their Nature and Properties must be immaterial.

2. We must be capable of judging the due Consequences of things. If we had nothing in us above Imagination, we could no more judge of the Reason of things than we do in Dreams; wherein are many lively Representations of things, but very little Coherence; and no consistent Reasoning, or proceeding from one thing to another. And when we awake, we presently discern the difference by the Inconsistency of those roving Fancies we had before: And if we really had nothing beyond Imagination in us, all our Discourses would be like Dreams; but we are able to put a difference between the disorder'd Ramblings of a Man in a Fever, or that talks in his Sleep, and the well composed Discourse of a judicious Oratour. There is something in us, which makes

us able to judge of Sense and Reason, and Coherence; and what is it? It cannot be *Imagination*, for that puts no Difference between them. And we too often find, how hard it is to keep the workings of Fancy within their Bounds; which are apt to disturb our Meditations, to interrupt our Thoughts, and to distract our Minds in the most solemn Acts of Devotion. So that we cannot deny that there is such a Principle as *Imagination* within us; which is very busie and impertinent; but there is something that can controul it, and keep it in some kind of Order, and repress the great Extravagancies of it. And this is that, which I assert to be an immaterial Substance within us; since it is above *Imagination*, which is the highest Faculty that Matter can be exalted to.

3. We must be capable of determining our own Thoughts as to this point, whether we have an immaterial Substance within us or not. We must be able to lay the Reasons on both sides, one against the other, and consider and view the Force and Weight of them; and those are of such a Nature, as no material Principle can penetrate into. How can Matter judge between Ideas of the Body and the Mind? Whether any abstract Notions can arise from Corporeal Phantasms? Whether a Being material in its Substance can be capable of immaterial Properties? If not, then any spiritual Properties must flow from a spiritual Substance, and consequently if there be immaterial Acts, there must be an immaterial Substance. And that is that thing which I am now to make out, from the Powers and Acts of the Soul, which we all find within our selves; and I shall reduce what I have to say to these three:

1. The *Power of Thinking.*
2. The *Power of Comparing and Judging.*
3. The *Power of Recollecting.*

Of these I shall speak distinctly to bring us to better acquaintance with our own Minds, which we are too much strangers to; and therefore think not so well of them as we ought to do.

1. I begin with the *Power and Acts of Thinking*: Some may ask what I mean by *Thinking*? I ask again what they can think that I mean by it? Something or other they must understand by it; and the Power of understanding the sense of a Man's Mind by his Words, is one thing that I mean by *Thinking*. But the most sagacious Brutes, which are used to some sounds of words, and by use find out some meaning of them, can never be brought to any kind of *Imagination* of what *Thinking* means. But we do not speak meerly of the Sense of single Words, but of entire Propositions, which the Mind of Man easily conceives and apprehends, and no Being inferiour to him can possibly do it. For although the parts of a Proposition may separately be apprehended by sensitive Beings, yet the putting them together they cannot; because that which joins them is beyond the reach of *Imagination*.

But since all Mankind are able to understand and to form Propositions, it is an evident Argument that there must be a Principle in them above Sense and *Imagination*; because it is impossible that an intire Proposition can come in by our Senses; because that which joins the parts together is no Object of Sense. *Man is Mortal*, is one entire Proposition, we may have representation from our Senses of what we mean by *Man*, and what by being *mortal*, but we cannot what is meant by *is*, *Man is mortal*; which makes the Proposition; for this is a meer Act of the

the Mind, and not taken up from any representation made by any Objects of Sense. From whence it follows, that there must be such a Faculty within us, which can form notions of things without any help from our Senses. And these being agreeable to the Nature of things are said to be Truths; and when they are not, Falshoods. But Truth and Falshood in the Mind come not from the Senses, but from that Faculty within us, which judges what things may be joined together, or affirmed of one another, and what not. Not that the Nature of Truth depends on our Faculties; but the Faculty of apprehending Truth and Falshood, shews such a power within us, which exceeds Imagination. For that judges only of Appearances, and not of the real Truth and Falshood of things.

But it is not the bare thinking of things as true or false which I insist upon, but under the greatest difference of Times, as past, present and to come.

But to proceed more distinctly, I shall consider the *Power of Thinking* these ways.

1. As to the *Thoughts of things past*, which we call *Remembrance*.
2. As to the *Nature and Reasons of things*.
3. As to the *Intellectual Pleasure*, which lies in the *Exercise of our Thoughts*.
4. As to *Correcting the Errors of Imagination*.

1. As to the *Power of Remembrance*.

It is a great Argument of the peculiar Excellency of the humane Soul, that there is so little difference in the Organs of our Senses, or the Structure of the Brain between us and Brutes; and yet that there is so vast a difference in our Thoughts. Which evidently proves that there must be a nobler Principle within us. If all depended upon the Frame of our Bodies, there must be some internal Organs within us, as far above the Organs of Brutes, as the Operations of our Minds are above theirs. But what is there so much as pretended in this Case? We see a remarkable difference in Animals above Plants, for they have Organs for Sense and Motion, which the other want; and so we plainly discern a difference in one kind from the other. I see no Reason why we should not allow proper Sensation to Brutes, and such a Perception as depends upon inward Sense; and they have such bold strokes of Imagination, as go beyond any meer Mechanism; but when we have yielded this, we find them to fall extremely short of those intellectual Operations, which all Mankind (who have their Senses) do find within themselves. Now we can find no such Organs in them fitted for such Actings which are confessed to be superiour to those in meer sensitive Beings. But if these depended upon the Body only, there must be such peculiar Organs for them, which must be as much above those of Sense, as these are above the Mechanism of Plants. And if there be not any material Principle in us which is capable of producing such things, then there must be something immaterial which doth it.

Let us now consider those Acts in our selves of which there appears some Resemblance in Brutes, and we shall find the difference so great, that they cannot be performed without a higher Principle than is in them. As for instance, we discern the Effects of the Impression of outward Objects upon their Senses, and the Remainder of those Impressions in a Remembrance of them; which we may call Memory; but how far short doth that fall of those Thoughts in Mankind, which

run back to things that are past? Those in Brutes are chiefly as to some sensible Evil they have felt, which leaves a deep Impression upon them; and makes them ready to revenge it upon those who did it; and by custom they become easie and tractable to those they have received kind usage from. But what are these things to the wonderful Effects of Memory in Mankind? Which relates not barely to sensible things; but such as depend only upon the Understanding; as the Sense of their good and bad Actions, whose Nature depends so much upon the consent of the Will of which they can have no Impression from without. As the Remembrance of wilful Sins committed at the distance of many Years; as of Murther, Adultery, &c. A Man's Conscience retains not only the Memory of the Facts themselves, but of the most aggravating circumstances of them; and such as depend upon the deliberation of the Mind, and consent of the Will to the committing of them. Now what Traces of the Brain, can these Moral Circumstances remain in so long and come as fresh into a Sinner's Remembrance, as if the Sins were committed but Yesterday? How quick and lively is the Sense of former Sins upon a Man's Conscience, when it is touched with a due apprehension of the Guilt of them? It may be said, that it was a very deep Impression at first which made it last so long. Suppose it were so, yet how came the moral differences of Actions to sink so deep into the Minds of Men? All the Art and Force in the World cannot make any Impression of the moral Differences of Actions upon Brutes: Some natural Instincts and Aversions they have, which they keep up; as being planted in them by their Maker, as tending to their Good, *i. e.* to their Safety and Preservation from Danger. But it is impossible to make them sensible of moral Good and Evil; or of the Rewards and Punishments which depend upon them.

But set this aside, what a wonderful thing is the Memory of Man with respect to the numberless variety of objects, which may be brought out of that great Abyss, in which they have been so long stored up; and yet without disturbance or defacing one another. I do not say, this Faculty is equal in all; for some have greater Capacities, more Attention of Mind, easier ways of sorting and recollecting their Thoughts than others. But I say, that the Faculty of Remembrance is wonderful in those who complain most of the Defect of it.

Who is there that cannot remember the Actions of many Years past, in the Days of their Vanity and Childhood? Even frivolous things, tho' at so great a distance, are often fresh in the Memories of those who forget many things of far greater consequence. Whence doth this come? If Memory were nothing *but decaying Sense*, as some have imagined, it would be impossible to give an account how old Men come to remember the passages of their Youth so exactly as they often do. So very Leviticus false is that saying, *That when we would express the decay, and signify* ch. 2. *that the Sense is fading, old, and past, it is called Memory.* No; Memory is a fresh and lively Representation of a thing long since past, as if it were but newly done; and *decaying Sense* is rather *Dulness* and *Proneness to Forgetfulness* than Memory. For how easily can many Men call to mind the very minute circumstances of Actions done by them at 30, or 40, or 50 Years distance? Where hath the Impression of these things been preserved all this while? Was it meerly in the Imagination from the Impression of Corporeal Objects? I do not deny that it began so at first; for it could not otherwise get into our Minds, because it re-  
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lates to external Objects; but the Imagination could never keep an Impression so long, because of the continual variety of new Impressions; which must deface the former.

That there is a remaining Impression within us is evident; for else there could be no such thing as Memory; but how that continues, and how it is revived is a thing which the more Men have searched into, the more they have been entangled and confounded. If in a Philosophical Age none had ever attempted to have explained these things in a mechanical manner, there would have remained a suspicion in Men's Minds, that if any persons who understood mechanical Philosophy had set themselves to it, they would have found out a satisfactory account of these Matters. But it hath fallen out quite otherwise; for all that have undertaken it in that manner have been miserably foiled in it; and have given such a mean and trifling account of them, that they have very much confirmed the Belief of an Immaterial Principle within us, although the manner of its union with the Body and Operations in it are above our present Capacity to comprehend. Neither the Temper of the Brain, nor the Course of the Spirits through the several pores of it can give any tolerable Reason, how we come to recover a former Idea, and to be able to judge that it hath been there before. It is plain, it cannot be the Object without us; for that is supposed to be long since past and gone; it can be no natural course of the Spirits, for then all former Impressions would return in their Course and Order; but there must be a Superiour Faculty which both preserves and recovers past Idea's within us. And this is that we call an Intellectual Memory; which is not confined to the Impressions of Imagination; but extends it self to all kinds and sorts of things, and reaches to things long since past, and represents them with the moral Circumstances of them, as if they were but newly done.

II. But this is not all which the Power of Thinking extends to; for, it reaches to *the Nature and Reasons of Things*; which goes beyond the bare Impressions which the Objects of Sense do make upon us. None can deny that we have a power of sorting and comparing several Beings with one another so as to find out wherein they agree and wherein they differ from each other; which power of abstracting can never be said to be derived from the Objects themselves; for they are Particulars, and no general Notions can arise from them, but they must come from the Soul it self; which views and compares the several Representations, and from thence forms its abstracted Notions concerning them. And as it considers and compares Beings together, so it searches into *the Reasons and final Causes* of them. These some have called, *the Fictions of our Brains*; but if our Understandings be nothing but Modes of Matter, how came such *Fictions* into them? But they go about to prove *there can be no such things as final Causes*. What do they undertake to prove by Reason, if we have no Understanding nor Freedom of Judgment.

*Spinof. Op.  
2<sup>o</sup> 3<sup>o</sup> k. p. 36.*

And therefore such Men have no Reason to be regarded because they contradict themselves, by first supposing us to have no Understanding, and then going about to convince us by Reason, which must suppose that we have.

There are two chief Arguments which they insist upon, which are both very unreasonable.

1. The unsuitableness of them to the Divine Nature.

2. The

## 2. The different Opinions of Mankind concerning them.

1. They say *they are unsuitable to the Divine Nature.* And why so? *Because, forsooth, they make God an imperfect Agent, because he doth things for an End, which shews that he wants something which he necessarily desires.* This is a very weak and foolish Reason, because every wise Agent acts for an End, because it is most agreeable to Wisdom and Goodness so to do. As a Father for the good of his Children, a Master for the good of his Family, and a Prince for the good of his People. And it doth not argue *an Imperfect Agent*, but a greater degree of Perfection to act for the good of those who depend upon him. God doth not need us, but we continually stand in need of the supplies of his Grace and Goodness; and it is the Glory of God to do good to his Creatures, in such a manner as is most agreeable to his Infinite Wisdom.

2. *But Mankind are not agreed about what is good for them.* And what follows, but that they are not so Wise as they should be? but that the far greatest part of them are very humorsome and fanciful Beings, which pursue their vain Imaginations and sensual Inclinations without regard to their true and real Good? But the true End and proper Good of Mankind remains still the same, being founded in the Reason of things and not depending upon Mens Imaginations.

And this is that which the Thoughts of Men may be and ought to be chiefly employed about; not about what Men commonly fancy and esteem; nor about what they see others pursue, but what is most proper and agreeable to their reasonable Desires and what tends most to make them happy. Our Thoughts have a vast compass with respect to the visible World, to search into the Reasons and Natures of all the several parts of it; and such kind of Thoughts argues something in our Minds above this visible World; but those Thoughts which go beyond this World and pierce into the Heavenly state are the most Spiritual both in their Nature and Design, and do tend most to the real Perfection of our Beings. I mean, such Thoughts which are employed about the Author of our Beings, and our Relation to him, and the means which tend to the Enjoyment of him; these are our best and most useful Thoughts, and our Minds are never in better temper, than when we can draw them off from this Scene of things and employ them about our Eternal Happiness. Such Meditations both discover the Spiritual Nature of our Souls, and make them much more so by the Exercise of them.

III. I consider the Pleasure that attends the Exercise of our Thoughts. This is a sort of Pleasure which thinking Men are not much envy'd for; but yet it is such as gives them far greater satisfaction than others find in the pursuit of sensual Delights. I grant, that it is not alike to all persons, nor to the same persons at all times, for there are some Circumstances both as to Mind and Body, which tend to the promoting of it, which are not always at our command. But if the Mind be free, and composed, and fixed upon such Objects which can make no Impression on our Senses, yet when it is engaged in them, it delights in the very pursuit after Truth, although at present it seems out of its reach; but as long as it has the true scent of it, it runs on with pleasure, and in hopes to attain it at last, it becomes restless and unwearied in the pursuit after it. What dissatisfaction is it to be taken off, although it be to attend to the necessities of natural refreshments. We are told some have been so intent upon their Speculations that they have spent Days

and Nights in them without Interruption; and thought not those their Friends who disturbed them. And these have been thought Men of a deeper Reason and profounder Speculations than others: And what was it these Mens thoughts were entertained with all that time? Was all this nothing but the effects of a strong Imagination? When *Archimedes* was pursuing his Demonstrations and forgot his Danger; how came his Mind to be so taken up? Did he not know the City was besieged, and in danger of being lost? No doubt he did: But having done all the Service he could, he betakes himself to the Entertainment of his Mind as the only Satisfaction he had left; and while he was in that Employment he lost his Life; for he did not think it worth his while to quit one to preserve the other. I do not go about to justify such a regardlessness of Life; but I only mention it to shew that Men of the greatest Minds have understood more of the Pleasure of Contemplation than other Men; which shews that the Soul hath great pleasures of its own; and although Men come far short of such great Minds, yet there is something so great in the Mind of every Man, that if he will give it its due Liberty and Incouragement, it will find not only an Employment but a Pleasure and Satisfaction in its own Thoughts. So it is in all Enquiries after Truth and real Knowledge; but especially in that which is of the greatest Concernment of all others, which is that which relates to our future Happiness. But that which gives the greatest check in this case, is a secret mistrust Men have of themselves as to their own Preparations for it; which in those who are good, arises from some misunderstandings of themselves, or of the Gospel; or for want of due Apprehensions of the Grace and Mercy of God. But however, these thoughts do tend to beget in us the truest and most valuable Pleasure of our Minds.

IV. The next thing I observe as to our Thoughts is the Power in them to correct the Errors of Imagination. Which are so many and so violent that were there not a superiour Faculty in us to correct them, there could be no such thing as true Knowledge, or reasonable Conversation among Mankind. For what Knowledge could there be, if we were to judge of the Nature of things by the Force of Imagination; which takes in things as they are represented by the Senses; and so the Sun and Stars must be thought no bigger than they appear. Yet the most Intelligent and Inquisitive Men, by their Reason and Observations, have concluded the Sun to be 160 times bigger than the Earth; and the fixed Stars which seem so little to us, to be 100 times bigger; what makes so vast a difference between *Reason and Imagination*? How come we to think otherwise of things than as they are represented by our Senses? but we know that Imagination left to it self, it is a wild roving incoherent thing; as we find in Sleep: but when a Man is awake he perceives the Errors and Extravagancies of Dreams, and judges otherwise of things than he did in his Sleep: Whence doth this come? Is it that Imagination awake is so much wiser than when we sleep? No certainly: That of it self is as blind and unfit to judge at all times; but there is a superiour Faculty in us, which compares these Imaginations together, and finds out those which are consistent and reasonable, and puts a difference between them and others. And when we are awake, Imagination is always restless, and thousands of Fancies come into the Heads of Men; which are not allowed, but are checked and restrained  
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by what we call Judgment and Discretion. For all Mankind would be thought distracted, if they did speak to one another whatever comes into their Heads; *i. e.* whatever passes in their Imaginations (as I have before observed :) But we find all persons have a Power over themselves so far at least (if they are not under the Power of a Distemper) as to keep from uttering the Extravagant Rovings of their Fancies. But that is not all, but by Reason and Consideration they may abate the force and rectifie the mistakes of them; whereby they are enabled to think as well as to speak consistently. And we are able to judge of anothers Discourse, whether it be coherent, rational and pertinent or not; but if there were nothing above Imagination in us, we could neither talk sensibly to one another in a continued Speech; nor understand one anothers meanings in different Languages; nor be able to judge of true Reason when we heard it. The manner of conveying the Sense of our Minds to others by Speech or Writing is an extraordinary Instance of something in Mankind far above the utmost Sagacity and Ingenuity of the Creatures below us; and shew that the Reason and Understanding of Mankind do argue a Diviner and Nobler Principle in us, than can ever arise from meer Matter and Motion.

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# SERMON XLIII.

OF THE

## True Happiness

OF

# MANKIND,

AND

## Immortality of the SOUL.

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PART III.

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*St. JOHN VI. 68.*

*Then Simon Peter said unto him, Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of Eternal Life.*

II. **I** Am now to consider another Power which we cannot but find in our selves; which is, of comparing our Thoughts one with another, and then judging according to that reason which appears best to us. We find great variety of Objects presented to us, and we are not determined by the first view of things; but it is in our power to examine and compare them with each other, and to prefer what we judge to be best. Which is a thing far above the Power of Matter to do.

There are two things especially of greatest moment for us to compare and to judge by; and those are,

1. The Difference between real and apparent Good.
2. The Balance between present and future Good.

On these two depends all the Wisdom of our Choice, and both these cannot be denied to be within the Power of our Faculties; or else we must be fatally determined without any real Choice. This indeed is  
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the main support of Atheism and Irreligion in our Age; and the most studied Advocates for it are run to this as their last Refuge; *viz.* That there is an Eternal Series of Causes, by which the Actions of Men are determined, although they believe themselves to be free at the same time, because they find no Force or Violence upon themselves; altho' they are really no more free than a Stone which falls down without any thing to stop its passage. This being so fundamental a part of *the Mystery of Iniquity* in our Age must be more carefully examined; but without running into those Disputes which suppose God a voluntary Agent, and who is at liberty to give such Measures of Grace, as he thinks fit in order to the Happiness of his Creatures. It is taken for granted, that Mankind do believe themselves to be free; but if they be not, how came they to think themselves to be so? What Series of Causes hath ever determined them to think so much otherwise of themselves than really they are? They may as well deny that they do think; for they have nothing but such a Perception of it as they have of their Freedom, for they know that they think no otherwise, but that when you tell them what thinking is, they do perceive such a thing in themselves; and the like Evidence they have of the Freedom of their Thoughts. If you bid them think of such a thing, they tell you they do it: If you bid them to think of another thing they as readily answer that they do that too; although these things be as remote from each other as the two Poles; and as little alike, as a Sun-dial and a Ship: Try them in what you please, they will tell you, they can think of whatever you will, that they can frame any Idea of; but how come they to turn their minds from one object to another, if they have no such thing as Internal Freedom of thinking? Whence come Men to change their Thoughts so suddenly, so accidentally upon another's desire, or their own motion? So that nothing can be more evident to the inward sense and common experience of Mankind, than such a Freedom of Thoughts is. And if we cannot be certain of this, how is it possible for us to be sensible of any thing? They may as well argue Men out of all their inward Perceptions as out of this; nay, they may with as good a grace and as much reason persuade them out of all their Senses; and that they fancy that they hear, and see, and taste, and smell, and feel when they do not, but are imposed upon by something which seems to be Sense but is not. For they imagine, that by their Senses they have a Perception of things in the Objects which they have not; but only of some things, which they know not what to make of, which they find within themselves; and therefore Sense is a meer Illusion; but for all this, Men will believe their Senses and judge by them in due Circumstances, let Men frame what Hypothesis in Philosophy they please concerning them. And why should they not believe themselves to be free, when they have plain Internal Evidence from their own Perception, that they are so; and no Evidence to prove that they are not so? For, all the Proof offered falls far short of any Evidence, and bears no weight against the Proof to the contrary; which it ought in common reason to do. But supposing the Proof were good, how can they ever hope to convince any one of another Opinion, if their own be true? For if Men have no freedom of Thoughts, then they are fatally determined by an unknown Series of Causes; and if they are so, then how can their Opinions be changed? And if they cannot, to what purpose do they go about to argue them out of them? But this very way of proving shews that they do not believe

lieve what they assert; for then no Proof can have any force, as it is a Rational Argument. For that supposes that Men do govern themselves by Reason, which this Opinion utterly overthrows. And if it were true, Reason and Argument would be the most useless and impertinent things in the World; if our Thoughts were antecedently determined by a Series of Causes which had no Reason in them. And if so, then every Man must think as he doth, because he can think no otherwise; and what a senseless and foolish thing is it to go about to convince Mankind, or to alter their Opinions in these matters?

But suppose they do allow some freedom of Thoughts, but deny any such thing as freedom of Choice; I say, the same Arguments from inward Perception and the common Sense of Mankind still holds; and that so much stronger, because Men cannot shake it off when they would gladly do it, to ease themselves of the Torment of their own Minds, from their wilful Sins. How fain would many believe this if they could? How ready would they be to turn off the Guilt of their Sins upon an unavoidable Train of Causes? But all this will not do; for the Consciousness to themselves of their own Wilfulness in committing their Sins, makes all these pretences of a fatal Necessity, add very little to their Comfort. And if it were true, Mankind must be the most unhappy Creatures in the World; to be fatally determin'd to do very ill things, and yet to torment themselves with the Thoughts that they did them freely.

But there is something yet farther to be said, *viz.* that this Principle overthrows all the Grounds, not only of Religion and Morality, but of Civil Justice in the World. For, all Mankind are agreed, that the Justice of Punishment depends upon a wilful Transgression of the Law; and therefore so great a difference is put between Acts committed wilfully, and with deliberation; and such as Men fall into by chance or necessity, without any set purpose or design. But if all Actions of Men are under the same Chain of Causes, which makes them necessary, then the very Foundation of such a Distinction is taken away; and Men are no more justly condemned for wilful Murder, than for an accidental Mischiefe. And although they may say, *the event is as necessary as the act*; yet that is no Answer; for that doth not shew it to be a *Just Punishment*, which relates to the wilful Commission of the Fault. If it be said *that they are justly punished, because they thought themselves free*; that gives a sad account of Justice; for it makes Men to deserve Punishment only because they are such Fools to believe themselves free, when they were not. But this is as much as so bad a Cause will bear; and it is far enough from being any thing like Evidence against the common Sense and Experience of Mankind.

Having thus far cleared the main Foundation as to our *Choice*; I now come to consider the chief Particulars which relate to it. And those are, as I said, to compare and judge of the difference of *Real and Apparent Good*: And to balance present and future Good; in order to our Choice. And in these two lies the exercise and business of our Thoughts, with respect to our Happiness, to find out that which is the *True and Real Valuable Good*; and which alone is capable of making our Souls for ever happy. These are things which above all others we are bound to enquire after; because we are most apt to be deceived about them; and a Mistake here is fundamental indeed. But that our Souls are capable of comparing and judging in this case, appears,

pears, because they are most proper to judge what is most suitable and agreeable to themselves, and answers best to their most reasonable desires; and what is defective and what not, with respect either to the Perfection or Continuance of our Good. So that whatever Good is capable of making us happy, must be suitable both to the *Nature* and *Desires* of our Souls; so consequently it must be both a *Spiritual* and a *Perfect Good*; for less than that cannot answer their capacities and desires. But because there is so much difference between our *Present* and *Future State*, and the desire of our Bodies and Souls; therefore we must enquire into these two things.

1. What Good is most suitable to our Present State.

2. What is most suitable to the Nature of our Souls and Future State.

1. What Good is most *suitable to our present State*; which God hath placed us in here. For since God sent us into the World, not with a design to torment us here; (for that were to make it a Hell to us;) nor that we should torment our selves, (for that were for us to make it a kind of Hell to our selves) but that we might serve him in this World, so as to be fitted for Happiness in another World. And this being the design of Providence, our best way of judging what is most proper for us *to desire* here, is to consider what is most agreeable to the end of serving God here. And this gives a reasonable allowance to all such desires as extend no farther than such conveniences of Life, as tend to make us serve God with more freedom and cheerfulness, and give us opportunities of doing more Good in the World. And so far as these things tend to so good an End, they are *desirable*; and therefore, it can be no fault in us to *desire them*, or to be pleased with them. Indeed, if we desire them for mean and bad ends, no doubt these desires are foolish and sinful; and if we suffer our selves to be transported with them, so as to place our Happiness in them, this is a Sin which is inconsistent with *the Love of God*; for we cannot have two chief Ends. And it is a good Argument against too much Love of the things of this World, *that they cannot be the Causes of any true Good to us*; because all the Pleasures of this World cannot amount to any *real Good* that can give any satisfaction to our Minds; but I think it not at all material to consider whether the Pleasures of our Senses arise from external Objects, as only the *Occasions*, and not as the *efficient Causes* of them. For which way soever they come, the Pleasures are the same, and the Temptations as great, and the Sin of as high a Nature; and it is very hard to convince Mankind that the Objects we converse with by our Senses do not produce those Pleasures which arise from our Conversation with them; and yet this *Hypothesis* makes them guilty of a most dangerous Error. For it implies that if they take them for the *Efficient Causes*, they make them the *Authors of Real Good to them*, and consequently place their Happiness in them; which is a most absurd and unreasonable Consequence, for it makes the fundamental difference of the Good and Bad to depend upon an Opinion which hath no manner of Evidence, and which tends to the overthrow of all the Foundations of Good and Evil. Suppose a Man doth believe that the things of this World are the immediate *Efficient Causes* of the pleasures we enjoy by them; must it follow from hence, that his Soul must be *united to them as the Causes of her Good*; and consequently place his Happiness in them? May not one love God as the only Foundation of his true Happiness; and yet look on the Creatures as the true immediate Causes of those Pleasures we enjoy by them?

them? If it be not to be supposed, then such an Opinion must be inconsistent with the true Love of God, and what then will become of all that are not the Disciples of a very modern Philosopher. But if persons may truly love God with the old Opinion; then what doth such an Opinion signifie; unless the Tempers of Men's Minds could be alter'd by new Opinions in Philosophy? May not one entertain this *Hypothesis*, and yet continue as vain and sensual and voluptuous as ever? May not another deny Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, and love God above all things, and yet continue in his old Opinion about these Matters? What then doth the change of his Opinion signifie to his real Happiness? It may be said, *That this is the most effectual Argument to convince Mankind of the Vanity of loving this World, when these things cannot produce any real Good to us, but are only Occasions of the Pleasures we have by them.*

I am so far from thinking it the most *Effectual Argument*, that I question whether it be any at all; and whether it doth not tend more the other way. For when Men are told they must not love the Pleasures of this World; and the Argument used is, *Because they are not the Efficient Causes of any real Good to Mankind*; how ready will Men be to argue on the other side in a far more plausible manner?

1. That it is confessed that there is a *Real Good* in these things; and the Question is, whether the Objects of Sense are the *Efficient Causes*, or only the *Occasions* of them. Let that be as it will, saith a voluptuous Man, and let the Philosophers dispute it out, it is enough for my purpose that these are confessed to be a *Real good*; which before, would not be allowed to us. For we were used to be told, that they were only *seeming Good*, and that we were deceived, if we took them for any thing else; that nothing could be a real Good, but what was according to the Principles of Reason and Virtue; what was Praise-worthy, and tended to promote the true Happiness of Mankind: But now it seems the Pleasures of Senses are owned to be a true and real Good, as they are agreeable to Natural Inclinations. But it is said, that by *Real Good* in this Sense, nothing is meant but what is *convenient and useful, and not that which really and truly does us good, or is the Efficient Cause of Pleasure to us*. Which doth not at all clear the matter; for then it follows that all those who believe the Efficiency of second Causes must take these for a *True and Real Good*.

2. They desire no better ground to proceed upon than to have this point put upon that Issue, whether second Causes be not efficient and not meerly occasional Causes as to the Good we do receive by them. And it is very dangerous to put points of such great consequence upon such a doubtful and uncertain Issue. For,

1. They have the Consent of all Mankind, Philosophers and others, till of late this Notion hath been started by a thinking Man upon the Principles of the new Philosophy; and it is founded more upon Imagination than Reason. But if it be of such ill Consequence to allow the Efficiency of second Causes, as to our Good; what becomes of all those who did take them for true Causes, and not meer Occasions? Did they mistake as to their true Good; and attributed that to Creatures which belonged only to God, and so were guilty of *Idolatry*, and of a great and fundamental Errour as to the Object of Happiness? If it were no such dangerous Errour in them, it is to be hoped, it is not so in any now; unless more convincing Reasons were produced for it.

2. This

2. This appears to be a meer precarious *Hypothesis* not founded on any evident Reason, but arbitrary Suppositions. The first ground of it, which I have observed, is a Saying of *Des Cartes*, *That all Motion comes immediately from God, and that it is a Mode in Matter, but not in God*; but he was unwilling to speak out, for fear he should be thought to make God the Soul of the World. From hence one of his Disciples in several of his Writings, carried it so far, as to assert that no Second Causes did really produce any Effects in us as to our Sensation; but that God upon the Motion of External Objects did immediately cause those Ideas which we find in our selves, which is truly to make God the Soul of the World. For how can he be more so, than if he be the immediate Cause of all our Sensations? Which seems to attribute great Honour to God, but in Truth subverts the Order of Causes which he hath settled in the World; and makes him the immediate Cause of the greatest Disorders in it, which arise from those sensual Pleasures, of which he is made the sole efficient Cause; which none can pretend to be for his Honour.

*Cartes. Ep. To. 1. Ep. 93.*

3. This Opinion doth not at all agree with the great Variety and Difference of Causes which are in the World. As we see in the different Organs of our Senses, which are framed with such Curiosity as is most suitable to the different Objects; and how can this agree with the infinite Wisdom of God to contrive the Organs of Sight and Hearing with such a Suitableness as well as Curiosity, as was most fitting to convey the different Objects in order to the producing different Effects: Which is all to little purpose if the Objects be only the Occasional and not the Efficient Causes; for far less Contrivance would have been sufficient merely to have given occasion for Ideas within us.

4. The holy Scripture which gives us the truest and most certain Account of what immediately concerns God's Honour and our Happiness, never gives the least Intimation against the Efficacy of Second Causes; but all along supposes them. It takes great care to assure us of a Divine Providence, and that all things are under the particular Care of that; and therefore puts Mankind upon such Duties, as imply our Dependance upon God, as the supreme Cause; but it still supposes an Order of Causes established in the World, and that all Creatures do act in their several places, but in a due Subordination to the first Cause. And this is not denied by the Assertors of this new Doctrine; but they give a strange Answer to this, *viz. That the Scripture speaks to the Capacity of the Jews who were no Philosophers.* But it is observed by others, that the Scripture seems to attribute all to God and very little to Second Causes; and both these can never hold. But for what reason should the Scripture comply in this matter with vulgar Opinions? Doth it not on all occasions assert and vindicate the true Honour of God against all the false Opinions of Men? Doth it not in a particular manner take care to keep them from that which leads them to Idolatry? Now this is the present case. It is said with Confidence enough even by *M.* himself, That the believing the Creatures to be Real Causes of the Good we find from them leads Men to Idolatry. For this is his Notion of these Matters, as it is expressed by himself; *That all the Motions of our Souls either in Love or Fear are due only to God; and that the Movements of our Bodies are determined by the Objects about us.* And that it is the indispensable Law of God, that all the Motions of our Souls are to be only to him; from whence it follows, that if they be applied to Creatures,

*Defence de l'Auteur de la Recherche, de la verite, p. 22.*

*Recherche,*  
l. 6. c. 8. we give them that Honour which belongs only to God, and that is Idolatry; and so he calls it. From whence I infer, That if this be really so, it is most unreasonable to suppose that the Scripture should comply with Idolaters, and not warn Mankind of the danger of falling into it; when on all Occasions, it doth with such a particular Force and Care dissuade Mankind from it.

But this is a point of too great Consequence not to be searched farther into; for it may leave the Minds of Pious and Devout Persons under great Perplexities; when they are told, *That any Movement of their Souls towards Creatures is Idolatry*; and they find it impossible in themselves to prevent any such motions towards those whom they think themselves bound to love, as Friends, Relations and Neighbours; and not with a meer *Love of Benevolence*. Therefore we must consider what their true Sense is as to this matter, and how far it will hold. We may, say they, *love our Neighbours so as to desire or procure any natural Good to them; or as capable of enjoying the true Good with us, but not as the Causes of any Good to us*. And if we take *Love for willing the use of a thing*, that they do not deny may be allowed to Creatures that are useful or convenient for us; and although they deny them to be *loved as our Good, yet not that they may be sought and used for our Good*. But when they say, *That we are not to love the Creatures*, they mean by it, *the Soul's uniting it self to any thing as its true Good, Beatifick Object, or the Cause of its Good or Happiness: For God only and not the Creature, is our true Good; Beatifick Object, and Efficient Cause of our Happiness*.

*Defence,*  
2c. p. 23.

*Harris Ad.*  
p. 405.

And this is that which we all say. Wherein then lies the Difference? Why are men condemned for not asserting the *Love of God* as they ought to do? And for giving way too much to the *Love of Creatures*, and humouring the *Natural Lusts of Men*? Why are they charged with finding out so *many Shifts and Devices* rather than rightly understand this Duty as to the *Love of God*, if after all they mean the same thing? Either they must condemn others for false Notions about the *Love of God*, or themselves in making so much Noise, when there is no real Difference.

But is there really no Difference? I am afraid there is a great one. And it lies in these things;

1. In denying a due subordinate Love to the Creatures; which according to this new Doctrine *may be used for our Good, but not loved as the Causes of any Good to us*. This will be best cleared by some Instances: As in the Case of Friendship between two persons contracted on a mutual Esteem of each others Vertues: Will they deny it to be lawful for persons to have a Love for one another, any farther than for *Use and Conveniency* as they serve for their Good? This is a very mean and false Notion of Friendship; and such as the generous Heathens extremely despised; because it is making themselves the end of all Kindness to others; and *to use them for their Good* is but the same thing in other terms. But if we may truly love a person of excellent Qualities for the sake of them; and take Pleasure in Conversation with such a one; is all this nothing but a *Movement of the Body without any of the Mind*? When all this Love is supposed to be grounded only on the Mind? And it is the same case in that *Brotherly Love*, which Christianity so much requires; which is built on other Foundations than *the using them for our Good*. But this sublime Notion seems to be taken from mean and common things, as the *use of Fire and Cloathing when we are cold; of Meat*



*Meat and Drink when our Appetites require them*; We grant, that things designed only for our Bodies are to be used for that end; and that we ought to love things suitably to those ends which Providence designed them for. But must we love our Friends, our Parents, our Children, our Benefactors, only with such a fordid Love, as they may be used for our Good? I know not how far their Notion of the Love of God may seem to exalt that above the common pitch; but I am sure this Notion of the Love of our Fellow-Creatures sinks it below the just Measures of Friendship and Natural Affection. For is that to be founded only upon *Usefulness* and *Conveniency* without any inward motion of our Souls towards them? This is a very strange and unaccountable Doctrine; if it be to be understood as it is expressed. And it is hard to judge otherwise what their meaning is. Here then lies the only Difficulty, to shew what Love that is which may be allowed to Creatures and is consistent with that Love which is due only to God. Of which I shall treat more afterwards; but here I shall give a brief Answer to it, and as clearly as I can: So far as any thing is desirable to us in our present state, so far we may give a proportionable Love to it. What supplies our necessary Wants, we may not barely use if we have it, but we are taught to desire it, as our *daily Bread*; and desire is a Movement of the Soul. Whatever adds to the true Pleasure of Life without breach of any Law of God, may be lawfully desired and enjoyed by us: For, otherwise that must be unlawful which is not made so by our Lawgiver: Whatever tends to promote the best ends of Living, the serving God, and doing Good, may be lawfully desired by us; because it is made good by the end and the Nature of the thing: Whatever expresses any Moral Vertue, as Gratitude to Parents and Benefactors, Kindness to Friends, Love to Children; all these are very lawful and commendable acts of Love, and consistent with the Love of God; although they suppose an inward Movement of our Souls towards them; for it is not the bare Motion, but the Kind and Degree of it, which is to be chiefly regarded by us: We must not only do acts of Kindness to our Brethren, but have an inward and hearty Kindness to them, if we would answer the Obligation that lies upon us. How absurd and ridiculous would it appear for any one to pretend to love his Brethren, or Friends, or Relations with a *Movement of his Body to do them good, but without any Movement of his Soul*, as to inward Affection?

2. The other real Difference in this matter lies in supposing that we unite our Souls to the Creatures as our true Good, if we take them to be the true Efficient Causes of those Pleasures which we enjoy by our Senses. For all the Force of the Arguments run upon this, that if we do not suppose God to be the immediate Cause of all those Ideas which we have by occasion of External Objects we must presently make them our chief Good: For which I can see no manner of Reason. For all the Question is about *Subordinate Causes* and not in the least about the *First Cause*: If we did suppose that these immediate Causes did produce these things of themselves and by their own Power, there were some ground for such a Conclusion; but when we own not only that God is the Supreme Cause, but that all other Causes do Act by a Power derived from him; and therefore all the Good we have by them must be acknowledged to be from his Bounty and Goodness; what imaginable Reason can there be for us to make those Creatures our chief Good, which could do no good at all to us, but for our Creator's Power and Goodness to us? For

we own, that *in him we live, and move, and have our beings*; not that God is our immediate Principle of Life and Motion; but that we derive all our Powers, and Faculties, and Comforts of our Lives from him, and depend only upon him for the Continuance of them. And what doth this take off from that Love which we owe to God, when we think our selves so much more obliged to a thankful and chearful Obedience to him, for those Comforts of Life which he affords us. I will not dispute with them, how far it is agreeable to Infinite Wisdom to be the immediate Agent and efficient Cause in all the Pleasures of our Senses which are occasioned by external Objects; but it seems more agreeable to the Honour of a *Supreme Cause*, not to be continually working at the Beck of his Creature and to be interposing with his Divine Power every time we see, or hear, or tast, or smell, or touch, to produce such Ideas in our Minds as we find answer to such *Occasional Causes* as move our Senses. So that although these persons seem mightily concerned for the Honour of God in this Case; yet the World will not be convinced that it is more for the Honour of a Prince to make Ships himself, or to build his own Houses, or to Coin his own Money, than to appoint Subordinate Officers to do those things and to give them full Power and Authority to do it. And God's Power is not lessened by any Power that is derived from him. The Sum of what I have said about this matter comes to this, that it is agreed to be a fundamental Mistake as to our Happiness to place it in any of the good things of this World; because they can never make a suitable Happiness to our Natures, as they are Reasonable: But because of the strict Union of Soul and Body here, and that the Comforts of Life depend so much upon the External Objects about us, God hath shewed his Bounty and Goodness to us in affording great variety of them for our Support and the more chearful Service of himself, and for the Opportunities of doing good to one another; and that these things are therefore neither to be despised nor overvalued; but our Wisdom lies in a good Choice, and moderate and charitable use of them: And that as long as we keep within these Bounds, we cannot make them our chief Good, although we look on them as the *Real Causes* under the First Cause, of those Comforts of Life that we enjoy by them. And lastly, That the greatest hazards we run as to these things lies in transgressing the reasonable Bounds which God hath set us; *viz.* when we desire and pursue unlawful Pleasures; or when we set too great a value upon things in themselves good and lawful; *i. e.* when our Minds are so set upon them, as to be drawn off from the pursuit of a far greater Good by them; or when we rather choose to sin against God than run the risque of losing our share in the good things of this World. These, as far as I can understand, are the due Bounds of our Love as to these things; and as long as we keep within them, I do not see any Reason for scrupulous Minds to be unsatisfied in the comfortable Enjoyment of what the Bounty of God in his wise Providence hath bestowed upon them.

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SERMON XLIV.

OF THE

True Happiness

OF

MANKIND,

AND

Immortality of the SOUL.

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PART IV:

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St. JOHN VI. 68.

*Then Simon Peter said unto him, Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of Eternal Life.*

2. **B**UT this is not all that we are to consider, *viz.* the suitableness of things to our present state; for we find desires in our Souls which extend beyond all these things. It is natural to all Beings to desire their own good; which is to be happy: But Mankind consist of two parts, of Soul and Body; and from the Union of these comes that we call Life; which must be supported, and God hath abundantly provided for it in the Frame of this visible World with respect to Mankind, which is suited so much to their Conveniencies of Living, as to the Heat of the Sun, the Light of the Moon and Stars, the Seasons of the Year, the Fertility of the Earth, the Usefulness of the Water, the Temper of the Air, the Numbers of living Creatures, the mutual Society of Mankind with each other; that they can have no cause to complain with respect to Providence as to this Life. But we find our Bodies decaying and Distempers growing upon them, and therefore the Union between Soul and Body must be dissolved in a little time;

time; and what then becomes of the Soul? Is that dissolved into several parts? But we find none that it is composed of. Is it evaporated and lost in the Air? How can that be, if it were endued with such Faculties of Reason as well as Perception, which the Air is not capable of? Is it annihilated, or fallen to nothing? How can that cease to be of it self, which could not make it self? If it had its Being from a superiour Being, it can never cease to be, unless he reduce it to nothing; and how doth it any ways appear that this is the Will of him that made it? It is Folly and vain Presumption in any to imagin, that what could not come into Being without his Power, should slip out of Being without his Will. Suppose then, that the Soul subsists after Death, what Condition will it be in? Will it hanker after the Body and hover up and down in the Air in hopes of returning to its former Companion? That is to suppose it miserable upon the Dissolution; and incapable of receiving any Satisfaction; since the Body moulders into Dust, and is utterly incapable of it self to become a fit Habitation for the Soul again. Or can the Soul in its separate state frame new Ideas of Happiness to it self; and being freed from the Clogs of Imagination entertain it self with its own Speculations, and hunt up and down the Invisible World for new Objects to please it self with? Or will separate Souls converse with each other in the Regions above, and be there made new Societies for another sort of Conversation, than they had upon Earth? But all such Conceits are meer Fancies of such as are not able to judge what the state of Separate Souls will be. We may be fully satisfied from Reason, that the Soul is Immortal and therefore subsists after Death; but our Reason is to seek as to the state of the Soul, because it doth entirely depend on the Will of him that made them; and we cannot know his Will unless he declares it. But by the Force of Natural Reason, Men have been able to satisfy themselves in these very material things;

1. That these things we see in the World could not come together of themselves, but were the Effects of a Wise and Powerful Maker of them.

2. That so great, and so wise, and so good a Being must be infinitely Perfect, or else he could not accomplish his own ends in what he hath done as to the World.

3. That our Souls were made by him, as Beings distinct from our Bodies and superiour to them; and therefore the same Happiness could not be proper for both.

4. That our Souls have Capacities and Desires far different from those of the Body; or such as relate only to the Preservation and Comfort of our Lives.

5. That the Capacities of our Souls extend beyond this World, because they will subsist after it; and the most reasonable desires of our Souls is to enjoy such a Happiness as may give full satisfaction to them.

6. That nothing short of a being infinitely perfect can do all this; because no finite Object can satisfy our reasonable desires, which are carried to an infinite Object, which alone can make it fully happy, and continue the Enjoyment of that Happiness so long as it self shall continue. The only Question remaining is, whether such desires in us, are reasonable; because we find our selves apt to have extravagant Desires; which have no Foundation but Fancy; and therefore some may suspect that such a desire of Happiness as this, is nothing but a Notion taken

taken up by some fanciful Men, who pleased themselves with the Imaginations of such a Happiness as had no real Foundation.

But to shew that our desires of a compleat and perfect Happiness in the Enjoyment of God are reasonable, I shall prove by two things.

1. Because they are founded on the Nature and Reason of things.
2. That they are such as the best and wisest Men have thought reasonable.

(1.) Those Desires cannot be unreasonable, which are founded in the Nature and Reason of things. If there be no such thing as a God that made the World, or a Soul that will subsist after Death; these desires might be thought to be meer Hypochondriacal Imaginations of persons, who give way to the workings of them. But these desires are founded upon all the Strength and Reason on which the Principles of Natural Religion are built; so that, if there be a God and Providence, there is no ground to question the Reasonableness of these Desires. For, is not a God of Infinite Perfections capable to make us happy beyond what our Conceptions can reach to here? And if our Souls be immortal, they must be for ever happy or miserable; for there is no lazy unthinking santering state in another World; no dreaming away Eternity with idle Fancies; no perpetual Sleep of a Being whose Life is thinking; and what Interruption it hath here comes from the Indisposition of the Body. But if the Soul doth subsist, it must be supposed to have its reasonable Faculties, and to make it happy those must be employed about the best Objects, and such as are most capable to give it full satisfaction. And what can that be but God himself? For since all Good is desirable, the most perfect Good must be the most desirable: For since desire is nothing but the Motion of the Soul towards what is apprehended to be good; the more perfect any Good is, the more vehement must the Desire be, if we pursue the Judgment of Reason. And so the Love of God as our chief Good, must be the most agreeable to the Dictates of Natural Reason. It is therefore agreed by the best of our modern Philosophers, *That there may be a Natural Love of God arising from a due Consideration of the Divine Excellencies and Perfections.* Des Cartes Vol. 1. Ep. 35. And that to this no more is necessary, but an attentive and diligent Consideration of the Divine Nature, as it is the Supreme Intelligent Being; and so our Souls being of an intelligent Nature, do not only owe their Production to him, but have some Natural Relation and Resemblance as to the Top and Perfection of the whole Kind. Then since we are to consider his Infinite Power, which hath produced the Universe, and all the parts of it; of which we make so inconsiderable a share, and the vast extent of his Wisdom and Providence, which comprehends all things in one View, and orders all Events by his Will; and how the whole Fabrick of the World depends so immediately upon him, that without his continual Providence they would all fall to pieces, and return to a Chaos or Nothing; these Considerations would work so much upon a thinking Mind, that he could not choose but love such a Divine Being, and joyce in the Knowledge of him, and so far unite his Will to God's, as to submit with Cheerfulness and Patience to whatever condition of Life he thinks fit to appoint; because it is the Will of so Excellent a Being. I do not say, that Man in this degenerate state can by meer Reason and Consideration come to so desirable a Temper of Mind; but from hence it evidently appears that the most thinking Men have been fully satisfied that God is the most proper Object of our Love, and deserves

deserves it best; however it be so difficult for us to perform, whose Affections are so much pre-engaged and entangled with the Love of sensual Objects. It is not drawing off our Minds from them, and representing the Divine Perfections to them, will enable us to love God, so as to make us happy, without the Influence and Assistance of Divine Grace. But they distinguish between a love of Instinct, and a love of Choice; and they suppose all Mankind have a love of Instinct, towards God, as the Fountain of their Beings, and of all the Comforts of Life; which they suppose natural and necessary to all thinking Beings; but there is another sort of love in the Souls of good Men, whereby they prefer God in their Choice above all other things; and this is the Love which God himself values and esteems.

*Regis la  
Moral l. 1.  
Part I. ch.  
2. Recher-  
che de la  
verite l. 3.  
ch. 4.*

But this sort of Love is confessed to be very difficult, by reason of the force of our natural Inclinations to sensible Objects and continual Conversation with them. But the best means to bring our selves to this Divine Love, is to fortifie our Minds against the Love of present things from the Consideration of the Divine Perfections, and God's continual Goodness to us, which tends most to bring our Souls to an Union of our Wills with his, wherein the Perfection of our Love to God consists.

But from hence it follows, that our Desires of God as our chief Good, are no unreasonable and fanciful desires, but are founded on the clearest and strongest Reason; because he is the most perfect Good, and therefore our Love doth of right belong to him; both from the Perfection of his Nature, and his Goodness to us. So that our Arguments for the Love of God, are not meerly taken from him, as the only proper Object of our Happiness in another World; but even in this, while we are surrounded with the continual Temptations to the Love of this World. For, if we put off our Love to God to another World, it will be very suspicious that we are willing to love this World as long as we can, and when we can enjoy it no longer, then to love God as our only Happiness.

But this is real Contempt of God, and making use of him for our Good; if we love him sincerely, we must do it while we are tempted to do otherwise, and are so apt to be drawn aside by the Impressions of sensual Objects, and our habitual Inclinations to them.

But here are two great Difficulties; first how to do it; and then how to know that we do it, which must be distinguished; because it is possible for those to love God above all, who may suspect that they do it not. And the Reason is, because the one is an intellectual Love, and makes little Impression on the Imagination; and the other is a sensible and passionate Love, which affects our Bodies as well as our Souls; and we are apt to take the most sensible Impressions to be the most real.

This is a matter of so much Consequence, as well as Difficulty, that I must endeavour to make it as clear as I can. But before I come to it I must take notice of this as a farther Argument of the Spiritual Nature of our Souls: For, if they are capable of such a thing as a pure intellectual love of God, on the account of his Divine Perfections which makes little or no Impression upon Imagination, then our Souls must be of a Nature very much above the Faculty of Imagination: For that can never reach to the Divine Perfections, nor to the exciting such an intellectual Passion as the Love of God.

But

But the present Difficulty is, since we are most apt to judge the most sensible things to be most real, how we shall know such a Love to be real, which makes not such sensible Impressions, as lower Passions do? To speak more plainly, our Love to God is built upon Considerations of so high a Nature, as cannot affect our Imaginations; our love to sensible Objects, or to the desirable things of this World is very sensible, and apt to make a very discernible Impression on our Spirits; how then can we ever hope to find out one to prevail above the other? For, there it must fix at last. For the best in this World are some way or other very sensibly affected with such things as they value and esteem here; I do not now speak meerly of sensual Lusts, but of the Pleasure in Friends and near Relations, whom they love very much, and think they ought to do it; how shall they know that they love God above all, when the Tenderness and Love they have for his Creatures, doth so much more sensibly affect them? To make way for a full Answer to this, we must take notice,

1. That we have different kinds of Passions within us, which work very different ways. For a Passion is nothing but an inward Motion within us, towards an Object apprehended by us, either as Good or Evil. Now Good and Evil may be taken either with a respect to our Minds, or to our Fancies. That which seems good to our Imagination depends upon the Impression made on them by sensible Objects, which make a grateful and pleasing Representation; which being so nearly related to the Body, and having such a Communication with the Animal Spirits, there follows a very quick and sensible Alteration in the Body; as is most discernible in the Passion of Love, and the more gross and sensual the love is, the more sensibly the Body is affected with it, as is easily seen in the differing Effects of it as to the same person upon different Motions, as of Virtue and Beauty. The one may be as real and strong as the other, but it hath not the same sensible Effects. And so the more intellectual any Motion of the Soul is, the less Impression it makes upon the Body, or upon the Imagination. So that we are not to judge of an intellectual Passion by sensible Impressions.

2. We are capable of understanding the Acts of our Minds by Reflection upon our selves. For, otherwise we must be such strangers to our selves, as not to be able to know our own Thoughts, and the desires of our Souls, which we are conscious to our selves of; and by comparing them together, are able to pass a Judgment upon our selves. For, otherwise no Man could know his own Sincerity; which he may judge of immediately as to particular Acts, but if he be to judge of Sincerity as to a state of Friendship with another, he must examine and compare several Acts together, that he may be able to judge truly concerning it. For there may be some Acts of Peevishness and Crossness which may seem inconsistent with it, but when he compares these with long continued Acts of Kindness, and under great Trials he will see no cause to suspect his Sincerity.

To come then to the main Point, how to be able to know that our Love to God doth really exceed our Love to other things, although we are more sensibly affected with them. And that may be done by these things;

1. By the fixedness of our Judgments, in preferring God as our chief Good. I do not mean a meer speculative Judgment; for no Man can have so little that understands himself, as not to prefer a greater and

more certain and lasting Good, before an uncertain and apparent Good; for this is not consistent with the common Reason of Mankind, when both are represented in such a manner; but it is such a true practical Judgment as carries the bent of the Will along with it. The Question is put by some thinking Men, what we may reasonably judge of the final state of such a person, whose Judgment in the General is clear and fixed, as to the preferring God and a Future Happiness before a Present; but yet he is too much under the power of sensual Inclinations, yet not so as to alter his general, firm and established Judgment. The Judgment which one gives of this case is, that if it be really the prevailing Judgment, which prefers the Happiness of another Life when he comes to die, his Soul will be happy; but if the other prevails he will not. But this is a very hazardous case to put it upon the Judgment at that time; but if it were put about a deliberate fixed Judgment in time of Health, and upon due and serious Consideration, and which had its due Effect upon the bent of his Will and the course of his Actions, there is then Reason to look on this as the prevailing Judgment, however there may be some violent Passions arising from the Body, which may give a great Disturbance to a Man's Mind in judging of himself. For all such Passions, which are founded in natural Inclinations and particular Constitutions, are not suddenly and easily subdued, by that Measure of Grace which God affords to Mankind here; as appeared in the case of *St. Paul*, who after so many Watchings and Fastings and Prayers, was still upon *keeping his Body in subjection*. One would have thought a Body so mortified and worn out should have had no Remains of Corruption left; but we see he thought otherwise; which is a great Instance of the Disturbance the Body sometimes gives to the most Excellent Minds, and of the Necessity of continual Care and Watchfulness over the Passions which do arise from it.

2. By the Temper of Mind which follows such a Judgment. If it be such a Practical Judgment, as ought to be, it will have an Effect as to the main bent and turn of the Soul towards God. For it is impossible to prefer him as our Chief Good, and yet not to have him frequently in our Thoughts; since it is so natural for Mankind to think of the Object they love; and therefore it is without Ground for any to imagine they love God, who seldom or never think of him, but have their Minds taken up with the Business or Vanities of this World. They who love God will desire to know more of him, and to converse more with him; and to draw off their Minds on purpose from the Delights of this World, that they may have more frequent Meditations of him. The frequent Consideration of the Infinite Perfections of the Divine Nature, is the best means to raise our Esteem and Admiration of him, and to inflame our Devotion towards him. Which doth not lie in a meer set course of Prayers to him, although that must not be neglected, but in a constant devout Temper, which offers up such frequent Ejaculations as discover where the weight of Affection lies. The true Love of God is known by the Pulse of the Soul, which is strong and quick, and restless in its Motion towards him.

3. By remarkable Trials. For it often happens that in an ordinary Course of Providence, those who have the strongest Affections may want opportunities to discover it to themselves, as well as to others. For although they love God above all things; yet they were never brought to a plain Competition between the Love of him and of other things;



things; and inward Spiritual Passions do not shew their Vehemency till there be some great Occasion to draw them forth. This made the Martyrs and Confessours of old to rejoice in their Trials, because they could thereby demonstrate the Sincerity of their Love to Christ. No doubt, those may love God truly, who do not suffer in such a manner for him; but I do not question that the satisfaction of their Minds, who suffered Death for his sake, was the great thing which carried them with so much Courage and Resolution through their Sufferings. A Souldier may love his Prince well, who dies in his Bed; but he that ventures his Life in the Field of Battle for him, hath the greater satisfaction that he parts with his Life for him, when he might have contrived ways to escape, which would have made him uneasy to himself, and ashamed to look his Prince in the Face. But if there be no such great Trials of our Love to God, that we are called to; yet the continual mortifying our evil and corrupt Affections, and getting ground of our Passions, although we cannot wholly root them out, if it continues to the end will be a sufficient Evidence of our prevailing Love to God. And as to the Love of Friends and Relations, that must be kept in a due subordination to the Love of God above all; which is then shewed, when we submit our Wills concerning them to God; and do not suffer our Minds to be so much taken up with them, as to neglect our Duty to God for their sakes. Which is the Rule our Saviour gives in this Case; *He that loveth Father or Mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth Son or Daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.* Matth. 10: 37. It is not any Degree of natural Affection is forbidden in it self, as being fixed upon Creatures; but such a Degree of it, as hinders our Performance of some necessary Duties of our Love to Christ, when he requires them from us. But if our Minds be fixed upon doing our main Duties, and are contented when God takes away our Friends and Relations from us, that shews that we do prefer God's Will before our own; and therefore such a Love is not inconsistent with our Love to God as our chief Good.

II. That our desires of a compleat and future Happiness in the Enjoyment of God as our chief Good are not unreasonable, I shall now prove from the Judgment of the best and wisest Men concerning it in the several Ages of the World.

This seems so much to follow from the former, as though it were only pursuing the same Argument; for if this be grounded on the Nature and Reason of things, those must be the wisest and best Men who do judge and act accordingly. But this is not the way I design to prosecute this Argument, but to pitch upon those Characters of Men which are most universally agreed upon as fittest to be Judges in a matter of so great Moment and Consequence to Mankind. And those are, 1. Persons of greatest Integrity and the largest Experience. 2. Such as have set themselves more especially to the Consideration of this matter.

1. Persons of greatest Integrity and largest Experience in the World: Which I join together, because those who have very honest and sincere Minds, may otherwise be suspected not to have had Skill or Opportunity enough to give a true Judgment about the Happiness of Mankind. For Men of a melancholy and morose humour may condemn the rest of Mankind for Fools, because they do not act according to their Fancies; which are cross and peevish, not out of Judgment but Temper; and if

their Blood could be sweetned, and their Humours removed, they would have as kind Thoughts of the World as others have. But if there be not so much of a natural Temper, if persons have accustomed themselves to a solitary and reserved way of living, they are apt to grow fowre and uneasie in Conversation, and to dislike all other methods of living, but those of Retirement and Contemplation. Therefore it is necessary in such a case as this, to take the Judgment of those who have seen, and understood the World, and know the several Projects and designs of Mankind in order to Happiness. On which account I shall mention two Men particularly spoken of in Scripture, with an extraordinary Character as to Integrity and Wisdom; and those are *David* and *Solomon*. The one is said to have been a *Man after God's own heart*, for his great Sincerity, and the other to have exceeded all Men for his Wisdom. *David* was a person of great Courage and Conduct, and one who from a mean Condition was advanced to a Throne, in which he struggled through abundance of Difficulties, and came at last to a quiet Enjoyment of great Prosperity for many Years. No Man speaks of God with greater Reverence and Devotion, with a higher Esteem of his Majesty and Goodness than he doth; no Man Prayed with greater Vehemency and more intense and earnest Supplications; no Man ever took greater delight in his Worship and Service than he did; no Man praised God with more affectionate Expressions than he; *Thy loving kindness is better than life*. And although he had so many other things to take pleasure in, yet his Heart was still upon God; and no Creature in Heaven or Earth could take off his Heart from him. *Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee*. These are not to be looked on, as pious and devout Strains fit to raise the Affections of People, for whom they were designed; but they express the true inward Sense of the Composer of them. Who owns that his Faith had been somewhat shaken as to the Providence of God from the Prosperity of wicked Men; but he found it all arose from want of due Consideration of the true Notion of Happiness; which they were far enough from in the midst of their glorious Shadows, and pleasant Dreams; but he soon recover'd himself, when he set himself to consider their Station and the Wisdom of Providence; and therefore

Pf. 73. 28. he resolves firmly to adhere to God as his only Happiness: *It is good for me to draw nigh to God*. And though *flesh and heart fail*, *God was the strength of his heart and his portion for ever*. If we look over the whole Book of *Psalms*, we shall find him on all Occasions expressing his great and deep Sense of the Favour and Goodness of God, and the Trust and Confidence he put in him in the worst Circumstances he could be in; and when he was in his best, the Favour of God was to him matter of greater Joy and Gladness than the greatest Increase of Worldly Riches.

Pfal. 4. 6. And we are to observe, that this was spoken by him, when the Favour of God was measured so much by Temporal Blessings; yet even then he saw something beyond all these things that was far more desirable than them. These were scanty and narrow Enjoyments which the Hearts of Men were so much taken up with for a little Season; but in the Presence of God *there was fulness of Joy, and at his Right-hand were Pleasures for evermore*. Which shewed that it was not a Temporal Felicity which he looked after; but that which was Spiritual and Eternal. *David* took an extraordinary Pleasure in the Worship and Service of God;

Pf. 122. 1. he was glad when they said to him, *We will go up into the House of the Lord*;

Lord; and when he was forced to be absent, how doth he lament his Condition on that account more than any other? How passionately doth he represent his Sorrow for it? And how doth he express his panting and thirsting after it? *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?* What is the meaning of this? Was not God present in all places, and could he not converse with him in his Mind? But it was the *Symbolical Presence* of God in the Tabernacle which represented Heaven, which made him so much desire to be there, and to praise God in the Congregation of his People. This he looked on as a kind of Heaven upon Earth to him, and that made him so much concerned, to represent his Joy when he was there, and his dissatisfaction at his being absent from it.

And when *Solomon* afterwards built a most magnificent Temple to manifest his great regard to the Honour and Service of that God, *whom the Heaven of Heavens could not contain*, God was pleased to testify his Presence there after an extraordinary manner; *for the Glory of the Lord filled the House of the Lord.* And this was the reason of the satisfaction the Minds of good Men then took in their Worship there, because it resembled the Happiness of Heaven, and the Delights of another World. And never any Man discovered more the Vanity of this World, than he did after his long and frequently tried Experiments; for he gives a very uncomfortable account of the state of Mankind in this World; for let them please themselves in it as much as they can; and still hope for better Times and greater Success, yet they will find at last that *all is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.* And therefore after he hath given a melancholy account of things here, he makes that wise Conclusion of his Book, *Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole of Man:* All his Happiness lies in preparing for another World, by a due care of our Selves and Actions: *For God will bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.* By these two remarkable Instances we find what the Judgment was of persons of the greatest Integrity and Wisdom.

2. I come to those who have made it their chief business to search into these matters; and I may safely say, that the wisest and the best of them had the same Judgment. These were persons who withdrew from other Employments in the World on purpose to search after Wisdom; (and therefore had the Name of Philosophers) but it cannot be denied that the Apostle gives a very true Character of too many of them, when he saith, *That they became vain in their Imaginations, and their foolish Heart was darkned; professing themselves to be wise they became Fools:* And that not merely in the business of Idolatry to which he applies it; but in the Nature of Men's Happiness. For they were most of them set upon finding it out in this Life; and thought it possible for Mankind to attain it by following certain Rules which they prescribed according to their several methods, (of which I shall, God willing, discourse afterwards) but there were some of deeper thoughts and of a greater reach; who found that as it was impossible for Mankind to come into the World without Providence, so it was as impossible, for a finite dependant Being to make it self happy. That those were only mean and vulgar Minds that could imagine Riches, or Honour, or Pleasure of this World could do it; which deceived all Men's Expectations, and had nothing in them to satisfy the desires of a rational Being. And it was a foolish thing in any to expect to be happy, when the Soul, which

which was the best part, was left destitute of that Good which was proper to it self; and therefore must be intellectual. And that such Beings were capable of Happiness, could not be questioned by those who believed there were such Beings above, whom they called Gods; and were agreed to be happy. Therefore it followed, that there might be such a Happiness as was most agreeable to the Nature and Desires of the Soul; which were to understand what was true, and to love what was good. But here they found the Understanding clouded, and apt to be deceived, and Truth lying in so great a mist of Obscurity, that Mankind could only express their desires, and lament their Ignorance and Mistakes, and hope for a better state: And although their Wills were in general fixed on what was good; yet they were miserably deceived with Shadows and Appearances, and false Representations, instead of real and true Goodness. Some general Notions they had of it, as to matter of Practice, what was to be done and what not; and those were the wisest Men who observed those rules best. But yet this moral Good, although it were very agreeable to the inward Sense of Men's minds, and tended very much to their satisfaction here, more than any thing besides; yet they found that they fell so much short both in Knowledge and Practice, that they despaired of any Happiness this way. There was then but one method left, and that was the true and only way, *viz.* to look up to that Supreme Being, which sent them into the World; who being of infinite Perfections was able to make his Creatures happy, according to their several Capacities. They found he had largely provided for Plants and Animals as to all things which were suitable to them; and for Mankind as to Food and Rayment, and the common Conveniencies of Life; so that there was abundantly sufficient for all, if they used reasonable care, and did not injure one another by Fraud and Violence. But still what becomes of the better part of Mankind, the thinking, reasoning and considering Substance within them? What is there to satisfy the best and most reasonable desires of the Souls of Men? They cannot but remain unsatisfied with those short discoveries of Truth, and those very imperfect Enjoyments of Good, which they can attain to here; and therefore certainly there must be something above which is able to fill these Capacities; for God never gave such without means proper to satisfy them. For then he must make the most thinking Creature of this visible World to be the most miserable: The very Power of thinking adding them to its Misery: For, he must needs be tormented with his Thoughts, who thinks he can never be happy. But why should any Creature think so, that considers, that he could not be a Creature, unless there were a Being of Infinite Power and Wisdom above him. And that he who gave him his Being, can as easily provide for his well-being: And since his Goodness is so great as to his present Subsistence, there can be no reason to question it as to a Possibility of the Soul's Happiness in a future State. For it is capable of intellectual Pleasures in Contemplation and Fruition of the greatest Good, which far exceed the gross and transitory Pleasures of the Body; and God himself being infinitely perfect must be this greatest Good; and therefore the truest Happiness of Mankind must lie in the Fruition of him in another World; if it be possible to be attained, as they supposed that it was.

According to such Principles as these did the best Philosophers argue; who agreed that the Happiness of Mankind could consist in nothing else

else but a likeness to God, and an Union with him; which was the fundamental Principle in the Schools of Pythagoras and Plato; as might be easily proved, if there were a proper Occasion for it. I shall only mention a Saying of Plotinus, who was conversant in the Doctrine of both. Plato, saith he, was much in the right when he said, that the chief Good is to be sought for above; and he that would be wise and happy must look thither; and must endeavour to be like it, and to live according to it.

Ορθός ὁ Πλάτων ἐκεί-  
 τον ἀνα-  
 δειν τὸ Ἄ-  
 γαθὸν ἀξιοῖ λαμβάνειν· καὶ πρὸς ἐκεῖνα βλέπειν ἢ μίλλοντα Σοφῶν, καὶ Ἐυδαιμόνα ἔπεισαι, καὶ ἐκεῖνο ὁμοίως εἶναι.  
 Plot. Ep. 1. l. 4. n. 16.

Thus I have at large taken a view of the Power of considering with respect to our proper and chief Good: And we do find in our selves a Power to compare apparent and real Good, present and future, sensual and intellectual Good, in order to the giving a due Preference to one above the other: All which is a manifest proof that the Soul is of a higher Nature, than these present, sensual and corporeal things; because it can raise it self so far above them, and prefer future, and spiritual, and eternal Good before them.

3. The last Power of the Soul which remains to be considered, is the Power of recollecting our Thoughts; by which I do not mean a bare Remembrance of Thoughts when they are past, which I have already mentioned, but I mean somewhat beyond that, which is a Power of reflecting upon our selves as to the Tenour of our Thoughts, and as to the inward Reasons and Motives of them. By the Tenour of our Thoughts I mean the general Course and Tendency of them; not as though it were possible for any Man's Thoughts to run always the same way. For even some of the best Minds complain of too frequent Distractions, and Interruptions of their most serious Thoughts; and they find that they cannot command their Imaginations, as they would. I find some speak, as though a devout Mind, full of serious Thoughts of the Divine Majesty, would so compose and fix the Imagination, as to charm it into a kind of Unactivity for the time. And therefore they say, that a Spirit of Devotion calms the Spirits, and quiets the Fermentation of the Blood, and centers it as it were in the Breast, and about the Heart, that it might be offered up to God, in fervent Prayer. There is no question but serious and fixed Recollection of our Thoughts beforehand, tends very much to a due Composure of the Mind in the Exercise of Devotion; and a careless, unfixed mind is far more apt to wander in the time of Prayer. So that a great deal of the Distraction of our Minds is too much owing to a want of due Regard to God, and to our selves; for we may check and draw in our Imaginations very much by a resolute Command of the Will; as we find when an extraordinary Occasion puts us upon it; and a great deal may be done by Attention and Watchfulness over our Thoughts. But after all, there is such a restless motion of Imagination, that our utmost care cannot always keep it in order, even when we resolve to do it. But still our Minds have a Power to recollect themselves, and to bring our Thoughts again into better Order; and to make us sensible of our own Folly and Weakness in the great Disorder of them. But herein lies a remarkable Instance of the Faculty of our Minds, in such Recollections of our Thoughts; that we can observe which way they run with greatest Pleasure and Delight; how far our Wills ran along with them; and gave occasion to farther Distraction. And no Man can say, that he hath  
 not

not such a Power within him to observe the Course and Tendency of his Thoughts, and how far it was through meer Inadvertency, without any formed Consent of the Will.

But there is something yet farther, which lies within the Power of Recollection of our Thoughts; and that is, that we cannot only call to mind what internal Acts there have been within us, but from what Motive and Principle they have come. As for instance, in the Acts of Love to God, we may recollect not barely the motion of the Soul towards him, but the motive to-it, whether it were a meer Love of Instinct as some call it, or a Love of Choice; whether it were upon meer Consideration of his natural and essential Perfections; or from his being the most eligible Good; and whether our Love to Creatures be not only more sensible, but more prevailling; and carries away the strong bent of our Souls from God, towards the Vanities of this World. I do not say, we can always judge with equal Impartiality and Clearness concerning our selves; for sometimes our Imaginations are dark, confused, and so much out of order by some bodily Distemper, that a Man's mind cannot find any Traces in the Brain so regular as to give any true Light; and this is not the case only of such as are called distracted, but of many who are only said to be discomposed. Whose Minds are under such a present Disorder, by Clouds, or Vapours, or Disturbance of the Animal Spirits, or whatever they will call it, that they can see nothing in its true Light within themselves; and the Spirit of a Man which is said to be *the Candle of the Lord*, discovers things but very dimly and confusedly, and seems to be put in a dark Lanthorn shut up on all sides for the time; only it may by degrees recover it self, and then wonders at the false Representations that it made. In such a case the Mind sees only dark and dismal Objects; all the bad Actions of a Man's Life then stare him in the Face, as though he were the worst of Mankind; but at other times things appear with another Light; and he cannot only discern the better side of himself, but the comfortable hopes he hath that he hath made choice of God as his Chiefest Good; and referred the main course of his Actions to advance his Glory, and to do good to the World.

2. Having thus considered the Spiritual Powers and Acts of the Soul, the only thing remaining is, the Spiritual Inclinations and Dispositions, which it is capable of. And without these Religion hath not its proper effect, which is, to rectifie and improve the inward Tempers of Men's Minds, by subduing evil Habits and Passions, and bringing them to be partakers of a Divine Nature; *i. e.* to be Holy and Heavenly, raised above the Corruptions and Vanities of this World, and preparing for the Happiness of a better. There are several sorts of Qualities in our Minds, which argue them to be of a Spiritual Nature; as the Faculty of discerning Truth and Falshood; the moral Qualities which we call Vertues; but above and beyond all these are Spiritual Graces; not that the Soul can produce these of it self, but that by the Influence of Divine Grace; our Souls are as capable of them, as of Moral Qualities; such are a true and lively Faith, as to God's Promises and Declarations of his Will; a firm Hope in God for the Performance of what he hath promised; an Universal Charity even to Enemies; an humble Dependance upon God, and Resignation to his Will; a mortifying the unruly Passions within us, and keeping our Minds in a quiet and sedate Temper in Submission to the Wise Providence of God. Now

none of these can be denied to be excellent Qualities, and the great design of Religion is to plant and improve these in the Minds of Men; and either they who will not allow the Soul's Immateriality, must deny that there are or can be any such Qualities in the Souls of Men, or they must grant them to be of a Spiritual Nature.

I have now dispatched the proof of what I undertook, as to the Capacity of the Souls of Men, with respect to the Happiness of a Future State.

But before I pass to another Subject, it will be necessary to make some useful Reflections upon these things; and those shall lie in perswading you to the Practice of these things.

1. To converse more with your own Souls.
2. To watch over your Thoughts and Passions.
3. To imploy your Minds upon the best Objects.

1. To converse more with your own Souls. The Knowledge of our selves hath been always look'd on as a great piece of Wisdom; and no doubt it is so. For our Happiness or Misery depends very much upon it. He that hath no regard to his Soul can never hope to be happy: For Happiness doth not follow it by a Necessity of Nature, but it is a matter of Choice. If there were nothing more than a certain course of things in the World; and that after a Life spent here in a careless manner, there were no future state to be expected, Men might justify themselves in passing away their time here, with as few disturbing Reflections as they could. But we cannot pretend any such thing; for we are assured by Divine Revelation, that there will be a future state, and that Men's Condition therein will be according to the care of their Souls here; and therefore there is the greatest Necessity of looking into our selves, and considering what the present Temper and Disposition of our Souls is; for as it is in this World, we must expect our future Condition to be. I do not mean, as to the degrees of those Qualities we now have; but as to the kinds of them. For here the Seed must be Sown, but the Product as to Happiness or Misery will be hereafter. That being the certain rule, which the Apostle lays down, *He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.* And lest Men should fancy there was no such necessary Connexion between these, he endeavours to prevent Men's Mistakes, by saying before-hand: *Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap.* But suppose a Man sows part to the one, and part to the other; so that his Life is mixed of the Fruits both of the Flesh and Spirit which is the general case of Mankind, what is to be expected then? For they consist of Flesh and Spirit, and sometimes one prevails and sometimes the other; and sometimes they give way to sensual Pleasures which God hath forbidden, and then they sin; sometimes again their Consciences are awakened with a Sense of their Sins; and then they repent, and are sorry for what they have done, and beg God's pardon, and do many good Actions, till another Temptation overcomes them. What is to be said in this Case? This makes it so much more necessary for Men to be better acquainted with themselves, and to observe all the Motions and Tendencies of their inward Passions at first, to prevent the evil Consequences of giving way to them.

For, although it be not in our Power to keep down all those first Motions which arise from our corrupt Inclinations; yet those cannot

Rom. 8.  
5, 6.

do us mischief, unless they get into our Souls, and gain the Consent of our Wills. For the case of Mankind would be very hard indeed, if we were to suffer for involuntary Acts, which we fall into by Inadvertency, or the Imperfection of our States; but *sowing to the flesh* is by deliberate and continued Acts, when they are not of a sudden overcome by violent Temptations, but go on in the course of a bad Life, pursuing the Inclinations of the Flesh; which he elsewhere expresseth thus: *They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.* That which I observe here, is, that the course of a Man's Actions is to give the Denomination to him: For he is said to be *carnally or spiritually minded*, as he pursues *the things of the flesh or spirit*: So that here are two very different Characters of the Temper of Men's Minds, although they have the same Faculties; and therefore we ought to be very inquisitive, which of these two we come under; for the Apostle never supposes a third sort, who are both *carnal* and *spiritual*. And yet, if we were to judge of most that go by the Name of Christians, they have something of both in them. They have a spiritual Profession, spiritual Desires at some times, and do some spiritual Acts of Piety and Devotion: But if we look into the Course of their Lives, there is so much Sensuality, so much Worldly-mindedness, so much Life and Spirit in the pursuit of a present Interest, so much Coldness and Deadness in what relates to Eternity, that it is hard to say that such are *spiritually minded*. And if not, then we have still so much more Reason to search more deeply and narrowly into our Souls to find out, which is the prevailing Disposition there; which requires very deliberate thoughts and frequent Observations of our selves, lest we judge amiss concerning our own Minds, which may be of very dangerous Consequence to us; and unless we can truly find the Love of God as our chief Good to be above our Love to other things, both in our choice and design, we have little reason to conclude that we are *spiritually minded*.

2. To watch over your Thoughts and Passions; and that for three Considerations;

1. The Irregularity of our Thoughts.
2. The Exorbitancy of our Desires.
3. The Disorder of our Passions.

1. The Irregularity of our Thoughts. It is of great Consequence in order to the Tranquillity of our Minds, to consider how far our Thoughts are capable of being brought under the Government of our Reason. For those which arise from the restless workings of Imagination are hardly capable of being brought into better Order, than to do what we can to repress them; and however to keep our Wills from giving way to them. There is a certain perpetual Motion of the Images in the Brain, as there is a Circulation of the Blood; and when persons are in health and make it their business, yet they cannot so fix their Thoughts for any long time, but these busy and unquiet Rovings of Imagination will be disturbing the most serious Thoughts; and put them to frequent Recollections of themselves. I cannot say, that all are alike troubled with them; but whether it arises from the Fibres of the Brain, or the different Quickness of Animal Spirits, or some accidental Indisposition, some are much more troubled this way than others. Natural Dulness in some is a great preservative against the Inquietude of Thoughts,



Thoughts, but few would be rid of them on those terms; but those who have brisker Spirits, must be content to bear with some Extravagancies in them. But at some times we find that when the Blood is inflamed by preternatural Heat, the Fancy grows extravagant, and very incoherent Images possess the Brain, and disturb and discompose the Mind; at other times we see persons so oppressed with particular Imaginations of what they abhor (as in the case of blasphemous Thoughts) that the more they strive against them, the more they are intangled with them. Now in all these Cases it is necessary to put a difference between the involuntary Effects of Imagination, and the Thoughts which come from our Wills, or are consented to by them. For since the moral Differences of Good and Evil depend so much on our Wills, we have no reason to think, that our Thoughts are any farther Evil than they are voluntary; I do not only mean by actual Consent, but when antecedent Carelessness, or habitual Inclinations are the Causes of them. Our great Business then as to our Thoughts lies in these things;

1. That there be no evil habits to produce them;
2. That we do not carelessly neglect our Thoughts.
3. That we keep a constant guard upon our Wills, that if any evil Thoughts start up within us from the habit of the Body, or the motion of Fancy, that we immediately reject them; and although it may not be in our power to keep them from being our Burthens, yet we may prevent their being our Sins.

2. We must carefully watch over our Desires too; which are too apt to go beyond their Bounds, if they are not narrowly look'd to. For the good things of this World are always ready to tempt and to draw us off from our chief good: These do not work equally with all persons, nor with the same persons at all times. For there are different Palates, and different Seasons, according to which the different Operations do very much depend. At some times sensual pleasures, which are the common and taking bait to the Souls of such as are too much swayed by meer natural Inclinations, yet may lose their relish, when Age, and Infirmities, and sad Afflictions for the present have mortified their present desires to them; but this quite differs from a spiritual Mortification; which takes off the Soul from the love of such things, as are inconsistent with the love of God, when Men become *Lovers of Pleasures more than lovers of God*: But here again a Question arises, whether there be any degree of this love consistent? Not of any unlawful pleasures; and as to lawful, it must be within the bounds of Religion and Reason. But the main difficulty lies how to fix those reasonable bounds to our desires, that they may not exceed, either as to the Honour, or Riches, or Pleasures of the World. And for that purpose these Rules may be useful to us.

1. To settle and keep in our minds, that the chief Good is to be the principal object of our desires.
2. That the prevailing motive to other desires, be the Subserviency of them to our main end.
3. That we keep within reasonable bounds as to the quantity and degrees of the things we desire.
4. That we be contented and submit to providence if we are crossed in what we desire. For that is to be our standing rule as to the good things of this World; if God by his wise providence casts them upon us, and puts us in a just way to attain them; we may lawfully so far

both desire and enjoy them: But if we find our selves disappointed by the same hand of providence in such things as we looked for, then our plain and necessary Duty is, by no means to murmur or grow uneasy, but to submit our Wills to his, who is infinitely wiser than we are, and knows what is better for us than we do for our selves. And this is a trial of our love to God, if we are contented with his Will, and rather choose to submit to that, than to enjoy our own; and that leads to the next particular.

3. We must do what lies in us to prevent and remedy the disorder of our Passions. To that end we must consider,

1. What Passions are governable, and how far.

2. What the best means are to keep them in order.

1. We must consider the different Nature of our Passions. The Passions in us, are those motions we find within our selves, upon the apprehension of Good or Evil; for that which arises only from the greatness or newness of an Object, is rather a natural than a moral Passion, and hardly comes under the government of our Wills. But as to moral Good and evil our Natures are so framed as to have a Tendency to what is apprehended to be Good, and an Aversion to what is Evil, whereof one is called Love, and the other Hatred; and as these are apprehended to be present or absent, other Passions do arise, as Joy, Desire, Sorrow, &c. But we are farther to consider, that we make a different Judgment of Good and Evil, as they please our Senses, and as they effect our Minds. That there is a natural Good in things agreeable to our Bodies, and that tend to the preservation of them, cannot be questioned; and consequently, that there is a natural Passion towards such a Good; which so far as it tends to the end of Nature must be lawful and allowable. For else we must reflect on the Author of Nature, which hath framed us with such Passions; and without which the purposes of Nature could not be attained; and there is a natural complacency which follows the agreeableness of things to these inward Passions. And so far as we keep within the bounds of Nature, there is no moral evil in it, any more than there is in the pleasure of Eating and Drinking, when we are hungry and thirsty; for the natural Appetite causes the complacency in the satisfaction of it. If therefore natural Passions go no farther than the meer complacency which arises from a suitable Good, there can be no sin in that; but if it exceeds its due bounds, then it becomes sinful and ought to be restrained. For that we are to consider, that God and Nature have set reasonable bounds to the most natural Inclinations; and for that end Mankind have Reason and Understanding given them; that they may judge what is just and fitting to be done, as to these natural Inclinations. From whence we must conclude, that whatsoever tends to overthrow the purpose and design of Nature must be unreasonable; upon which Principle the Vertues of Temperance and Chastity, which respect the Government of natural Inclinations as to sensual Pleasure are founded. And because our Reason discovers that there is a higher kind of Good, than what gratifies our Senses, there must be another kind of Passions within us suitable to the Nature of it; and the Nature of that Good being intellectual, either there must be Passions in us above those mentioned, or we can neither love, nor desire, nor be delighted with any spiritual Good; but if these be allowed those must follow which respect what is apprehended to be evil of the same kind. By this we see, that there are Passions of very diffe-

different kinds within us ; and herein consists the great difficulty as to the Government of our Passions in our present state to bring those of an inferiour Nature under the command of the superiour Faculties. It is possible for Men to check one Passion by another, when they both respect the Body ; but this is governing rather by Policy than by Reason. It may be we may find all ways necessary to compass the Government of such unruly motions as our Passions now are. But it is certain, that Reason ought to keep them in their due order ; and it fails when it doth it not : And it is no hard matter to convince Men that they ought to do it ; but in this degenerate state no such thing is to be expected, without the powerful Assistance of Divine Grace ; yet even that co-operates in the way of Reason ; and therefore we must consider the best rules in order to it.

2. That is the next thing to be spoken to, *viz.* What are the best ways and means in order to a due Government of our Passions.

1. The first is, to consider that we ought to be more affected with Moral and Spiritual Good, than with what is only natural and sensible. For therein consists the main difficulty as to the subduing those Passions which are founded in natural Inclinations ; and nothing can be more effectual to that purpose, than to possess our Minds with greater apprehensions of the Value and Worth of our Souls above our Bodies, and consequently of all that Good, which tends to improve and make them happy.

2. To make a true Estimate of sensible Good ; how short and transitory it is ; and how impossible to answer our Expectations, if we do not degenerate into Brutes. And that a great deal of sensible Pleasure is taken away by the Sense and Remorse of Conscience for the neglect of better things. And therefore the Mind that consults its own tranquillity and satisfaction will have the greatest regard to that which brings the greatest inward Pleasure along with it ; which certainly comes rather by the governing those Passions which are founded in natural Inclinations than in yielding to them.

3. To make account of Disappointments as to such things, which our inferiour Passions are most apt to be fixed upon. It is impossible if we give way to unreasonable Desires, that we should be satisfied ; for the Desires will increase, and things we desire cannot be certainly enjoyed ; the wisest thing we can do then, is to set bounds to our Desires, and not to be disturbed if we lose what is so uncertain. For if we make account of it, the Surprize is gone when it happens, and we are better prepared to bear the loss of what we could keep no longer.

4. Not to set too great a Value upon our selves ; for immoderate Self-love makes Men very uneasy, if every thing doth not answer expectations. This inflames their Blood, and heightens their Passions upon every occasion, where there is any thing that looks like Contempt. But he that knows himself best, will more easily bear the ill Usage he meets with from others, and most quietly submit to the Hand of God, as *David* did upon the Provocations of *Shimei* ; which were very great at that time.

5. The best remedy against the power of Passions is to beg the Divine Assistance in such a manner, as not to neglect a constant care of our selves ; and to fix our Minds upon God as our chiefest Good. The more we look up to him, and the more hearty and sincere our Prayers are to him, so much the more composed will our Minds be, which are  
never

never in better temper than when they draw nigh to God, and are under the immediate Influences of his Grace. For that alone can give true Peace and Contentment of Mind, when all other Moral Considerations may swim in our Thoughts, but do not enter into the Depth of our Souls.

3. This is the last particular Advice, *viz.* to imploy and to fix our Minds upon God as the best object of our desires. For this not only tends to calm our unquiet Passions, but to raise our intellectual; by representing God often to our Minds, as the most desirable Object; both with respect to this Life and a better. For the Thoughts of God will keep us holy and humble from the Infinite Disproportion between him and us, when we are most apt to be vain, and self-opinionated. For what is our weak and shallow Knowledge of the outside of things to his Infinite and Unsearchable Wisdom? By which he comprehends all things at one View, and orders all things by the exactest Methods; and upholds all things by the same Power by which he created them. How mean a Creature is Man, in comparison of his Divine Perfections, even the wisest and most thoughtful Man? What pains do Men take to search out the Meanest of his Works; and at last find themselves so much to seek as to the Nature and Operations of them? But what need they any thing without themselves to shew how scanty their Knowledge is? When the Union of their Souls and Bodies, and the manner how they work together, or upon each other is above their Understanding. We know not how it is that External Objects produce such Ideas in our Minds, which are not in themselves, and of which there are no Traces ever to be discerned in the Brains; nor how they come to be preserved there without any sensible Impressions; nor how to be recover'd after a long distance of time; nor how the Imagination comes to be so busie and active, when the Images are past which were first imprinted; nor how the Mind comes to be so often clouded by the dark and obscure Representations of Fancy against the Power of Reason: Or how the Soul determines the motions of the Body with that Quickness and effectual Power; how it comes to be united so closely with it, without any such ties as are suitable to the Nature of either of them. These and many other such Enquiries baffle the most inquisitive Wits; and therefore certainly, it is not the Knowledge of our selves can make us happy; for then we can never be so. But there is a great and wise and perfect Being, who alone is able to do it; and such is his Infinite Goodness that he is most ready to do it; if we through our Folly do not reject his Kindness, and make our selves for ever miserable. It seems indeed, too great a thing for such worthless Creatures to hope for such a Happiness, and if we were to obtain it by our best Services, we might justly despair of it; but such is his Condescension, as he is pleased to offer it upon such terms, as are most for our Advantage, and if we heartily comply with them, we have no reason to mistrust the Promise of a God of so much Goodness and Truth.

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# SERMON XLV.

## THE ADVANTAGES OF CHRISTIANITY

As to the  
Way to Happiness.

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### PART V.

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St. JOHN VI. 68.

*Thou hast the Words of Eternal Life.*

**T**HERE were Two things I chiefly designed from these Words;

I. To shew by Reason, That the Souls of Men have a Capacity for Eternal Life.

II. That Christ in the Gospel hath shewed us the only certain way to it.

The former I have dispatched, but before I come to the Second there is another Enquiry to be made; *viz.* Why our Happiness is put off to another Life; or whether Mankind be not capable of it in this Life?

As to this matter I shall propose two things;

1. To consider the best Methods, which have been thought of for Happiness in this Life.

2. To shew the Defectiveness of all of them; and the great Advantages we have by the Gospel above them, both as to this and another World.

1. I shall consider the best Methods which have been thought upon by Philosophical and Contemplative Men for a state of Happiness in this Life.

And

And a three-fold Scheme hath been drawn of it; which deserves to be considered; the rest fall in with these as not to be regarded.

1. Of those who placed true Happiness in the exercise of Vertue, with good Circumstances of Life; which was *Aristotle's* Doctrine.

2. Of those who placed it in the sole exercise of Vertue; which was the Opinion of the *Stoicks*.

3. Of those who supposed such a state of Pleasure attainable, as made up the happiest Condition in this World; and this was the Notion of the *Epicureans*, taking it in the most refined Sense of it.

But the Christian Doctrine differs from all these Schemes in these Particulars;

1. It proposes nothing like a state of Happiness in this World; either in the Goods of Fortune or otherwise.

2. It offers the best Arguments for Patience in this World, and for Happiness in another.

3. It makes our greatest Happiness here to lie in Dependence on God's Providence and Contentment in our Condition.

Now the Objections which lie against the former Schemes, are either General or Particular.

1. In General, they are all liable to these Faults;

1. That they possess Men's Minds with false *Idea's* and *Notions* of a state of Happiness here.

2. That they suppose it in their Power to make themselves happy, if they set themselves to it.

1. That they possess Men's Minds with false *Idea's* and *Notions* of Happiness here; which was the very thing which the Moralists designed to cure in others; *viz.* the great Mistakes they were under, as to Happiness, when they placed it in Riches, or Honour, or Sensual Pleasure. But if they run into the same mistake themselves, what reason have they to blame others? For, say they, suppose we be mistaken in the main, yet we have something which pleases us; and although we cannot be absolutely certain of enjoying the good things of this Life, yet we do that which we judge the far greatest part of Mankind set the greatest value upon; for we love to judge of Men not by a few fine Words, but by the course of their Actions; and this is that they pursue after different Methods; and therefore let Speculative Men say what they will, the busie part of Mankind seem to be agreed against their Notions. For they talk only of Airy and Imaginary things; as a Perfection of Vertue, and a pleasant state of Life, consisting of Indolency of Body and Tranquility of Mind. Where were these things ever to be found? who could ever keep his Body from Pain, or his Mind from Trouble, or his Condition from Accidents? Therefore all such Schemes of Happiness, as propose any thing impracticable and unattainable do mischief to Mankind; and put Men upon such Adventures as they read of in Romances of some great Beauty which none ever saw, or were like to do; and so their Life is spent in a vain pursuit after a meer Fancy and *Idea* of an unattainable Happiness.

2. Another Fundamental Mistake was, that they supposed it to be in Men's power to make themselves happy if they pleased. This they took for granted in all their Discourses of Happiness; and their business was only to lay down such Rules which they were to observe, in order to it. And they said many excellent things, as to the rectifying the common Mistakes of Mankind, about Good and Evil, and what was fitting

fitting to be pursued as their chief End; and about things in their Power and out of their Power; and about regarding the Temper of their Minds above outward Circumstances: But when this and much more was said by them; who had the necessary command of their own Passions? It was no hard matter to disguise them, and to change their Names and to appear easie to others, when they were tormented within. No Men ever pretended higher as to the Conquest of Passions than the *Stoicks*; and they talked in such a lofty strain, as if really they could think themselves happy under the greatest Torments; but common Sense was too hard for them; and when they allowed their Wise Man to put an end to his Life in such a Condition, they proclaimed to the World, that they really thought him in Misery: For no Man desires to be discharged out of such a state, wherein he thinks himself happy.

But these things will best appear by the particular Defects of the several Schemes;

1. I come therefore to consider in the first place, that Scheme of Happiness which places it in a *Perfection of Vertue with good Circumstances*. The chief Defect, which I charge this with, is supposing a *Perfection of Vertue* necessary to it, and offering no means to attain it; and this without any regard to another Life.

(There are other Defects which I pass by, as that the *Exercise of the Mind in Contemplation* is sufficient to make a Man happy in this state. And that a *continued good Condition may be had in this World*; which none can reasonably hope for, or expect.)

But I shall make it appear, that the Christian Doctrine, although it promises nothing of real Happiness here, yet doth contribute more to it, than this Philosophical Scheme doth.

The *Perfection of Vertue and Happiness here*, is the Foundation of the Philosophers Discourse of Happiness: For he saith, *That Vertue is the proper Excellency of Mankind; and to make him happy it must be in the highest Degree and the most perfect state; for it is not a Day or a little time can make one happy, no more than a little warm Sun-shine can make a Spring.* Aristotle was no Fool; and he considered what a sort of Being Mankind is; and he observes an irrational part in us, that is not a meer dead weight, but that it is active and opposes Reason; and Moral Vertue lies in the curbing that and keeping it in due order. And he supposes such a Degree of Vertue attainable by Diligence and Care that he may come to be happy by it. It cannot be denied, that he proposes a noble End, and fit for Mankind; but how is it to be come by? He is very willing to leave it to Men's Endeavours; and although some Degree be attainable, and so much as to lessen the Troubles of life, and to make amends for the Pains of getting it, yet where is the state of Perfection; and without that, no Happiness.

It may be said, that under Christianity it self, which supposes Divine Grace, no Perfection is attainable here; and wherein then lies the Advantage?

I answer, That although no state of Perfection be attainable here, by those Measures of Grace, which God thinks fit to give (unless Perfection be taken for Uprightness) yet the Christian Doctrine lays a better Foundation for that which is next to Happiness, which is Peace and Tranquility of Mind. I do not say, without Vertue; for *there is no Peace to the Wicked*; but that the Doctrine of Christ doth offer the best

Means to keep our Minds compos'd and settled in this imperfect and uncertain state of Life.

And that it doth these ways;

1. By removing the most perplexing Fears and Doubts as to another World.

2. By giving the greatest Inward Support as to the Troubles of this World.

1. By removing the most disquieting Doubts and Fears: And those are such which relate to an Infinite Being and a Future State. *Aristotle* takes very little notice of Providence, and less of another World; which shews the great defect of his Doctrine about Happiness. He sometimes supposes *the Gods to have a kindness for the Souls of good Men, because they are most like to themselves*; and he borrows some Expressions from *Plato* to that purpose. But his Discourse of Happiness is plainly calculated for this World; and although he allow'd the Mind to be separable from the Body, yet he knew not what became of it; nor offers any Considerations about it. He lays down many good things about the nature and kinds of Moral Vertues; and acknowledges something Divine in the Soul; but as to Religion and the due Fear of God he lays no weight upon it. It may be said, *That he designed only a Moral Happiness*; but therein lay his Fault, that he took no notice of Piety towards God, as the *Pythagoreans* and *Platonists* did in order to a virtuous and happy Life. It cannot be denied, that he doth sometimes speak of another kind of Happiness, which is designed for some extraordinary persons *who had an Heroical and Divine sort of Vertue in them; and that by this Men do become Divine*. And that there is in some Men, a kind of *a Divine Nature and Influence* which helps them, which he calls the *most perfect and true improvement of Nature*. And in another place he puts the Question, *How happiness is to be attained, whether by Learning, or Exercise, or Practice, or by Chance, or by Divine Destiny*; and he immediately saith, *That if the Gods give any thing to Mankind it should be Happiness; it being the best thing they are capable of*. And in another, *That Men may be made happy by a Divine Cause*. Now these things are of great Advantage to Christianity; for they shew, that Divine Grace is no unreasonable thing to suppose in order to true Happiness, and that it may advance our Minds to a higher degree of Vertue. But *Aristotle* doth not make it necessary to that kind of Happiness which he treats of; and yet supposes it to be a perfect Happiness in this Life, by the Moral Exercise of Vertue: If he had only said, *That Men's Lives are more happy or miserable according to the Degrees of Vertue, which they have and do exercise, he had said nothing but what was most agreeable to the general Sense and Experience of Mankind*. For truly virtuous and good Men do generally meet with the fewest Troubles of Life, and bear them better, and enjoy the Comforts of Life with less Envy and truer Pleasure than vicious Men do their greatest Riches and most extravagant Delights. For there is great difference between Noise and Pleasure; the true Pleasure of Life is no loud, boisterous, violent Passion; but a calm, and easie, and compos'd Temper; neither transported with Prosperity, nor dejected by sudden Accidents; nor overcome with violent Passions. If there be such a thing as Happiness here, it lies within such a Compass; it is no perfect and uninterrupted state; but it is much beyond the rest of the World in ease and contentment of Mind.

And



And that not meerly as to outward Circumstances, but as to inward Satisfaction, as to such things which the Mind of Man is most Inquisitive about in relation to Happiness. Herein lay the great defect in *Aristotle's* Scheme of Happiness, that in the drawing of it, he goes no farther than this Life. For when he mentions *Solon's* saying, *That no Man can be said to be happy before his Death*; he declares his Mind, that it could not be intended of a Happiness after Death, τὸ τὸ γε παντελὲς ἀποπον; for this, saith he, were very absurd, especially upon his Principles which supposed Happiness to consist in Exercise. What can the meaning of this be, but to deny the Happiness of a future state? And in the foregoing Chapter he supposes the change of a Man's Condition before his Death spoils all his Happiness; and therefore no Man's Life can be said to have been happy before his End. But he makes an Objection, how far a Man after Death will be concerned at the good or evil Fortune of his Posterity; and his Answer is in general, τὸ μέλλον ἀφανὲς ἡμῶν; all future things are dark and obscure to us; but at last he resolves that the Affairs of Posterity signifie little or nothing after Death, as to Happiness or Misery; but that the former depends entirely on the firmness and constancy of a Man's Mind in the practice of Vertue, while he lived.

We must do *Aristotle* all the right we can; and in another place he asserts, *That Happiness properly belongs to the Mind, as being the most excellent part of us*; and he grants, *that there is something Divine in us, which hath the Notions of Good and Evil; and hath peculiar Pleasures of a higher nature than any our Senses are capable of, and are more sufficient of themselves for a real Happiness.* And beyond this, he supposes, *That a good Man is the most in favour with God*; which he not only repeats but argues upon it. For, saith he, *if there be a Divine Providence, as it seems probable, God will regard that most, which is best and most like to himself; which is a good Mind; and that he will Ἀντιποιεῖν, reward those who do love and improve it.* This is a very remarkable Testimony in him; and the more, because of the Inference which he deduces from it, viz. *That Man ought not to regard so much his Humane as his Divine part of himself; but as much as lies in us, ἀποθανατίζειν to immortalize our selves*: one would think by this, that he took great care of another World; but in the next Words he explains himself, that he meant *living according to the best Principle within us*; which is our Mind, and therefore he saith, *That is the most pleasant and happy Life.*

It's true, that here he uses several of *Plato's* Expressions concerning the Mind, and its near Relation to God; but he seems to be at a loss about another Life; he is not peremptory against it; but rather seems to suppose it, *because such a Divine Principle could not die with the Body*; but he goes no farther, leaving all in the dark as to another state. Something may be said in his excuse, that he never ventured farther than the thing could be made out by Reason; but *Plato* took in Ancient Tradition, which he allowed not to have any place in his Writings. So that what *Plato* affirmed, as to a future state, *Aristotle* omitted, because he could prove nothing beyond this Life. But this must be said that he offered very fair Grounds for receiving the Doctrine of future Happiness, from what he asserted as to the Excellency and Happiness of the Soul; so that nothing was wanting on his Grounds, but the Evidence of Divine Revelation; since his Principles do very well justify what the Doctrine of Christ hath revealed concerning the Happiness of the best Minds.

But herein lies the great Defect of this Scheme, that it can give no satisfaction to Men's Minds as to another World. He speaks great things concerning the nature of the Mind, and the excellency of Vertue, and the pleasures of the contemplative state; but if we enquire of him, what will become of these Minds in another state, he leaves it in the same obscurity he found it, and offers nothing towards the Resolution of so material a Point.

But therein lies the great Advantage of the Christian Doctrine, that  
 2 Tim 1. 10. Eternal Life is brought to light by it, as the Apostle speaks. For there was great obscurity as to what concerns a future state before. There was an Ancient Tradition, a general Consent, and better Arguments for it than against it; and none had taken more pains to prove the Immortality of the Soul than Plato had done; and yet we find his own Scholar Aristotle, (and that for many Years) yet so doubtful and uncertain about it, that he dares not mention it, where it was most necessary in a Discourse about the Happiness of Mankind. If he had been perswaded of it, where had it been more proper and seasonable? He could not deny the Mind to be of a nature far above the Body, and separable from it; but he knew not what became of it. He despised the Poetick Fables; and had no Esteem of the Pythagorean Revolution of Souls, which Plato had too much espoused; for he could find no Evidence in Reason for it, and therefore he went no farther than a Happiness in this Life; but then he supposed a Perfection of Vertue, and the best exercise of our Minds necessary in order to it.

It may be said, that Aristotle went according to the Principles of Reason, and that Revelation is a thing of another kind, and cannot give such satisfaction, as Reason of it self would have done.

To this I shall give a distinct and clear Answer;

1. Aristotle himself grants, That Moral Matters are not capable of that Evidence in Reason which other things are; and none hath spoken oftner, nor to better purpose about it, than he hath done. He begins his Moral Discourses with saying, That the same Exactness is not to be expected in all Subjects; especially where there is so much difference of Opinions; and therefore no Man of Understanding will require more than the Subject will bear; no Man expects Eloquence from a Mathematician, nor Demonstrations from an Orator. To the same purpose not long after: And again in the beginning of the next Book. In another place in Moral Matters, he not only allows strict Reason, but Testimony and Examples; and he calls it Ignorance and want of Judgment, for any not to distinguish such Arguments as are proper from those of another kind. But we are not now enquiring into the Foundations of Morality and the Evidence they are capable of; but concerning a Matter out of our Reach, as to sensible Evidence, or Mathematical Demonstration; and the Question is, what Evidence is to be admitted in this case. And in a matter which relates to another World, where Happiness and Misery depend upon the Will of God, it cannot but appear the most satisfactory way for God himself to declare his Mind concerning it, in such a way as is most agreeable to the Nature of the Thing and the Reason of Mankind: For, as God himself can best declare the state of Souls in another World; and there can be no suspicion of any mistake therein, if it be known to be his Will. So there must be such satisfactory Evidences that it is so, that no reasonable  
 1. 2. c. 2. Man can refuse giving his Assent to it. Aristotle complains, that in Moral things there wants, τὸ ἔσuxός, something to fix upon; now in matters  
 of

of another World, we can have nothing so firm and certain as the Will of God revealed to us in a satisfactory manner.

2. But what is this *Satisfactory Manner*; for therein the main difficulty lies? I answer, That in a matter which depends upon the good Will of another, our business is to examine, whether it be agreeable, 1. To the Character of the Person who is said to reveal it. 2. To the Intention and design of it. 3. To the just Apprehensions of God and our Souls.

1. The Character of the Person; he must be one thoroughly acquainted with the state of another World; *i. e.* in short, the greatest satisfaction must be by one who comes down from Heaven and assures us thereby of the Truth of that happy state above. And the World was run so far into Scepticism and Infidelity, that less Evidence would not content them; for they had disputed so long against each other, where Philosophy came, that Men were much more to seek, than if it had never come among them. And there wanted a Superiour Authority to over-rule the Cavelling Wits of Men: So that the best Philosopher in the World could never have settled this matter upon meer Principles of Reason; since Men had learnt the Art of making things probable on either side, but certain on neither. If Christ himself had undertook to demonstrate a Future state, the very offer to demonstrate had raised all the Smatterers in Philosophy into a Flame; and none so busie and forward in such ways of disputing as those who have not Judgment enough to find the difference between Truth and Probability. So that a Divine Revelation was the only way to put an end to these Disputes; but then the Character of the Person must be agreeable to that of his Message; he must be Holy, Humble, Innocent, and wholly unconcerned in the Affairs of this World and taken up with the great designs of another; and to this Character our Blessed Saviour fully answered, and none besides him had ever done it.

2. It must be in such a manner, as best answers the intention and design of such an Errand, which is to persuade Mankind to believe it and look after it. And therefore it must be delivered in a plain, authoritative manner, apt to awe and convince the best part of Mankind, *i. e.* such as enquire after a future Happiness. It must be delivered, not in a Symbolical Mysterious manner, as though Men should understand too much of it. but freely and without reserve, and with great Courage and Resolution. For the want of that makes the Force of the strongest Reason suspected. And if Christ had not suffered for his Doctrine, Mankind is so suspicious, that from thence they would have justified their Infidelity. If *Plato* had followed *Socrates* in his Resolution, and affirmed his Doctrines positively, and not with such Reserves, he might have done much more good at *Athens* than he did: But *Plato's* Art and *Aristotle's* Fear spoiled all the Effects of their Moral Doctrines; and turned them into Disputes and matters of Speculation. Which have never been in the Christian World concerning a future state and the chief Happiness of Mankind, although there have been too many about the other Articles of the Christian Faith. But to all this we must add the Miracles of Christ's Resurrection from the Dead and those of his Apostles afterwards, which confirmed the Truth of their Doctrine.

3. That there must be nothing unworthy of God, or unsuitable to the Souls of Men; but every thing agreeable to our Conceptions of the Goodness, and Holiness, and Justice of God, and tending to the Happiness of good Men and Punishment of the bad; this is a true and satisfactory

factory Account of it. And this we assert to be the true state of the Case, as to the Discovery of a future state in the Gospel. For, herein we have the state of Souls in another World represented according to the nature of their Actions in this: For it is said, *That God will render to every Man according to his Deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, Eternal Life; but to them that are Contentions and obey not the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness, Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil.* This is the Substance of the Revelation of the Gospel as to another World. And what is there in all this unbecoming God or Mankind? Yea, what is there, which doth not agree with the Essential Attributes of God, the Differences of Good and Evil; and the just Rewards and Punishments of good and bad Actions? We see, that in order to Eternal Life, not only well-doing is required, but a *patient continuance* therein; which implies a firmness of Mind, or a Constancy and Resolution not to be shaken by the vain Hopes or Fears of this World. And it is not any good Purposes or sudden Resolutions that will be sufficient, but there must be *well-doing* and *continuance* therein. But how can this be, when all Men fail so much in well-doing? and those whom the Apostle writes to had been remarkable for their *ill-doings*? Therefore his Words are to be understood in the Sense of the Gospel with the Allowance of Repentance and Human Infirmities: But there must be that which the Moralists call, *καλοκέραια*, or *True Goodness*; i. e. such a Temper of Mind as supposes an inward Probity and Sincerity, and a Disposition of Mind to all that is good and praise-worthy. He is such a good Man that hath good Principles, and doth good Actions for their own sakes, because they are good; and doth them out of Choice, and with a firm and settled Resolution, and not from a Natural Temper, or for some outward Advantages to be had by them; and to all this, it is requisite that such a one hath a true and impartial Judgment as to Good and Evil; not but that they may be mistaken in lesser things, where the Difference is not so easie to discern; but in all the main strokes of Good and Evil, he is careful to observe all the Lines of his Duty and to avoid all kinds of Evil. *Aristotle* observes, that it is the true sign of a good Man, when he hath a true taste of Good and Evil, when those things which are so in themselves appear so to him; as things appear with their true taste to a person in Health, but not under a Distemper: so it is a very ill sign to have a corrupt and vitiated Palate as to Good and Evil; when things Good in themselves appear Evil, and things Evil in themselves appear Good, or they are willing to put false Colours and Appearances upon them; for it is a great sign the Inclination is bad, and that they are willing to be deceived.

The Substance of what I have said is this, that we can have no reason to be unsatisfied with the Account of a future state given in the Gospel, since it is built on the common Principles of Reason in Mankind, as to the Consequents of the Good and Evil of Men's Actions; and is suitable to our due Apprehensions of God. For, as *Elihu* long since said, *Far be it from God that he should do Wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit Iniquity; for the work of a Man shall be rendered unto him, and cause every Man to find according to his Ways.*

Herein lies the first Advantage of the Christian Doctrine, that it removes the most perplexing doubts as to another World.

2. Another

Rom. 2. 6,  
7, 8.

Eudem. l. 7.  
c. 15.  
Magn. Moral. l. 2.  
c. 9.

Job 34 10,  
11.

2. Another great Advantage is, that it states the matter so as to afford the greatest inward Support, as to the Troubles of this World. And that lies in two things, which the Moralists made little account of, and those are,

1. Particular Providence. 2. Divine Assistance.

1. Particular Providence. *Aristotle*, after all the Passages produced out of him, speaks but faintly and doubtfully concerning Providence with respect to Mankind; he rather makes God an universal Cause of the Order and Disposition of things, than a particular manager of them for the good of Mankind. In one place of his *Morals* he speaks of his *Self-sufficiency*, and *having all good things in himself*; but then asks, *What doth he? He cannot sleep: What then? Some say he Contemplates himself*; Magn Mor. l. 2. c. 15. this he accounts *ridiculous*. But he never mentions his Providence, where it had been most proper. But whatever his Opinions were (which doth not much concern us) we are sure that it is a main part of the Doctrine of Christ to convince his Disciples of it, and to persuade them to a constant Dependence upon it. That God regards all things that happen to them, and therefore they ought not to trouble themselves with solicitous Cares about the World; for *God would take care of them, if they cast their care upon him*. 1 Pet. 5. 7. Which were a bold thing in any to pretend to do, if God did not make it their Duty. But it must be understood in a way becoming God and our selves. Not as though God would take care of the most improvident, careless Wretches, who make themselves miserable by not doing their own Business. For a diligent, prudent care of our Affairs is a Duty incumbent on Christians, but we ought in doing our Duty not to be too anxious about the Event of it, but leave that to the wise care of Providence. And therein we rid our selves of some of the most uneasy Circumstances of Life; which arise most from our uneasy Minds; and if they can be kept in order our outward Condition cannot be so troublesome to us.

2. Divine Assistance. This was a thing which the Moralists made no Account of; for they struggled, and complained, and argued, and fretted, and turned themselves every way, but only to him who was *able to help them in time of need*. It is no unpleasant Entertainment to a Man's Mind to consider the great variety of Arguments which they made use of to support themselves under the Troubles of Life; but true Christian Patience and Submission to the wise Providence of God is beyond them all and tends more to the Comfort of their Lives. But of this more in answer to the *Stoical Arguments* about *Fatal Necessity*.

2. And therefore I shall now consider their *Hypothesis* as to Happiness in this Life. The *Stoicks* obtained a great Name in the World, for their setting up *Vertue* as the sole Foundation of Happiness here. *Aristotle* was thought to esteem *Vertue* too little, when he thought it necessary to joyn a Prosperous Condition with it in order to Happiness. He could not understand how a Man could be happy as such, unless he had Health of Body and Conveniencies of Life besides *Vertue*. He did not require abundance, & γδ ἐν τῇ εὐφροσύνῃ τὸ ἀυλαγχεῖ, Ethic. Nic. co. l. 10. c. 9. for *Contentment* doth not lie in it. All that he required was a Competency and Sufficiency for doing virtuous Actions, and not great Power and Pomp: And he thinks *Solon* commended those as the most happy Men who led virtuous Lives and did good Actions with a Mediocrity of Fortune; and *Anaxagoras*, he saith, never thought a Great or Rich Man happy, however the common People esteemed them. But on the other side, he saith, it is absurd

l. i. c. 9. 10. furd to imagine Happiness under great Calamities; for although he asserts the Pleasure of a vertuous Mind to be the main Foundation of Happiness, yet he supposes nothing extraordinary to happen as to outward Misfortunes; and he accounts it ridiculous to suppose a Man to be happy under them. He allows, (1.) That the Foundation of Happiness must be something fixed and stable, and not like a Chamæleon, liable to great Changes; and this, he saith, is the practice of Vertue. (2.) That he cannot be indifferent whether his outward Circumstances be good or bad; because the Goods of this World are great Instruments of Vertue; and bad Circumstances will discompose Men. (3.) That a vertuous Man hath under Calamities very much the Advantage of another; because he will act according to vertue, and as becomes a good Man; and that his Vertue shines most under them; being not insensible, but bearing up himself as he ought to do: And if we are to judge of Happiness or Misery by Actions, a good Man cannot be miserable, because his Goodness will be conspicuous in the worst Condition; for he will do no mean or bad Actions; and he will bear his Troubles decently, and make the best Improvement of his Circumstances whatever they be; as the best Artificers do of such Materials as they have; and a good General of such an Army as he can get. (4.) That he will not say a good Man can be Miserable, because he hath still the Foundation of his Happiness firm and unshaken; but he cannot say he is happy when he falls into great Calamities in his old Age, as *Priamus* did. He doth not think ordinary Calamities make any remarkable Alteration in him, but very great and many. But if a vertuous Man lives a great while in the Practice of Vertue and attended with good Circumstances of Life, this Man he accounts happy, *as far as a Man can be*; and that is as far as this Life will bear.

This is his true Notion as to this matter; and it seems agreeable to the common Sense and Reason of Mankind: But the *Stoicks* would maintain, that a vertuous Man was happy under the worst condition of Life: And the great Principle they went upon, was this, that nothing makes a Man happy or miserable, but what is really good or evil in it self. That there are some Original Inclinations in Nature, (which they called *Prima Naturæ*) which appear first in us; but are not best in themselves; such is the Principle of Self-preservation and what tends to it; so we find in Children, that it is not what is pleasant that they desire, but what is necessary, Food; and there are some things so agreeable to Nature that they are desirable for their own sakes; as Health and Knowledge; and that a Regard is due to those things that are so, and tend to them; and as to these, we are to look on them, as the first Principles of Nature. But as our Knowledge increases, we discern an Order in things, and some greater excellency in matters proposed to our Choice than in the meer Necessities of Nature; and in those the chief good of Man consists, to which his Actions ought to refer; so that he that acts according to Reason and pursues his chief Good must be happy; and nothing can make him miserable but what is repugnant to it; *i. e.* not any thing that is only evil in Fancy and Opinion, but what is contrary to his Duty as a Man. And nothing can be said to be really good but what is praiseworthy, and affords inward Satisfaction to him that doth it; so that nothing but what is morally good can make him happy, and nothing but what is morally evil can make him miserable; and therefore no outward Calamities can do it. This is the substance of their Scheme of Happiness; wherein these Defects are observable.

i. That

1. That they affected to speak out of the common Road, and change the Names of things; but at the bottom they in effect said the same that others did. It was a noble design in them to set up Vertue alone to make Mankind happy; and to make him not at all to depend on any thing without himself. And to this end, they said, that nothing could make him happy but what was truly good; but nothing without us was so; and therefore he must entirely depend upon himself for his Happiness; and that part of himself which was not liable to such Casualties and Distempers as his Body is. But here lay the weakness of this Hypothesis; that Man was not one jot less liable to Pains, and Diseases, and Misfortunes for all these lofty Speculations; and Men's Senses were the same, and their inward Perception the same; and what good could it do Mankind to have our Pains and Diseases called by softer Names; as if a Fit of the Stone or Gout were to be called only involuntary Tensions of the Parts and not Maladies or Pains; the case would be all one as to Men's feeling and bearing of them. This is only palliating and varnishing, and not repairing the Defects of our State; it is not to make us happy, but to play with our Misery; it is but laying Colours upon rotten Wood and covering a Dunghil with Snow. They were a sort of Mountebanks in Morality, who with great Words and Promises deceived Mankind, and left Nature just as they found it. For who could bear Calamities the better for a new Name put upon them? And who would despise the Goods of Fortune or Nature, because *they were not to be chosen*; as long as it was allowed *that they might be preferred*. And the *Stoicks* brought nothing new into Morality but Names; for all that concerned the Excellency of Vertue and the chief Happiness of Mankind lying in it, had been said long before *Zeno* opened his School, or *Cleanthes* and *Chrysippus* improved it. But all these things are so fully made out in the Conference between *Cicero* and *Cato*, that I shall not insist more upon it. De Fin. l. 3.  
4.

2. But what remedies did they offer Mankind against those Calamities which they lay under, and found it not in their power to prevent? Surely they would not trifle with Mankind herein. It cannot be denied, that they have many excellent Sayings; and witty Sarcasms upon Mankind; but what they offer by way of Remedy is very insufficient; for, after they have talked of rectifying Opinions and governing Passions and things out of our power, &c. they resolve all at last into a *hard Fate*; or an Eternal Series and Concatenation of Causes and Effects, which it is to no purpose for us to struggle with, and it is impossible for us to alter; and therefore we may talk as we please, and divert one another thereby; but our main business is to submit and to be quiet, for it is to no purpose to be otherwise. Now the Christian Doctrine lays the Scheme of Men's Happiness quite another way and especially in these things;

1. That the chief good of Mankind lies not in himself but in God, who is the only Supreme Good; and is most desirable for himself and with respect to us.

2. That the enjoyment of this Good, so as to make us happy, is not to be expected in this World; but that our Eternal Happiness depends upon our choice of him here, and referring our Actions to him as our End.

3. That we are not to expect a better Condition in this World than others meet with, though we place our Happiness in him; because our

Hopes are as to another World; and God may distribute these things as he pleases.

4. That the Evils of this World are very subservient to the Happiness of another; by preparing Men's Minds for it, and fixing them on a better State.

5. That while they are under the evils of this State, there is a wise Providence of God, which orders every thing for the good of them, who make him their Happiness.

And I shall now shew the Excellency of this Scheme above the *Stoicks* in these respects;

1. It gives greater satisfaction to Men's Minds.

2. It enables them to bear Troubles with a better Temper.

1. It gives greater satisfaction to Men's Minds; for Fate rather confounds and amazes us than offers any reasonable Satisfaction: We may soon perplex our Thoughts with an invisible Series of Causes out of our reach; and when we have gone as far as we can, what are we the better? It is a Labyrinth we are lost in, and that is all the Comfort we find; which is very sad to those who would fain see the Way out; but are told by their Guides, that it is impossible: O miserable condition of Humanity bound by a Law which they cannot know; and tied up by such Chains of Darknes, that they can neither perceive nor break through them. The true question in this case is not whether Men may not think themselves free, when they are not; for what satisfaction is it to Mankind to be made Fools? And it is not, whether Mankind may not act as if they were free when they are not? For what Comfort can this give a Man, that he acts and suffers, as if he were free, when he was far from it? For nothing makes the Condition of Mankind more miserable, than this; that they must endure the Punishment of Faults, as if they were free in the committing them; and yet they were determined to do them by necessary antecedent Causes. And here, the Question is not, whether bad things may not deserve to be punished whether freely committed, or not; but whether those persons deserve to be punished, who did not commit them freely? *But they thought they did.* And what then? Must men suffer inevitably for their mistakes? And for such a mistake, which in the present state of humane Nature is almost impossible to be prevented or cured. It is very hard indeed with Mankind, if they are first made Fools, and then punished for making themselves so. Yet nothing is become so popular with Atheistical Persons, as this blind Series of Causes, which makes all Actions and Events necessary. But it is impossible to satisfy any Man's Reason as to the Reward of Virtue, and Punishment of Vice upon that Supposition. All that they have to say, is that humane Nature is so framed, as to desire and to do such things as bring mischief upon themselves; and if they be so made, who can help it? Should the Vessel say to the Potter, Why hast thou made me thus? Thus St. *Paul's* Authority is made use of by those who allow no power above Nature; and overthrow the whole design of Religion; and suppose Virtue and Vice to be nothing but the different Effects of Men's Constitutions. It's not denied that some are more naturally inclined to some Vices than others; but none are fatally determined to the effects of those Inclinations; which Reason and Consideration, and Prayer, and the Grace of God may subdue. And if this were impossible, Education, Counsel, and Laws, were very impertinent things, as well as Preaching.



Preaching and Praying; in short, the Foundations of Morality as well as Devotion must be subverted if a stoical Fate be received.

But my business now is, to consider which Hypothesis gives greater satisfaction to ones Mind under the Troubles of Life, that of Fate, or of Providence. And supposing the difference of good and bad Men in the World, there are these two Arguments, which are against Fate, and make for Providence.

1. That under Fate the best have no better ground of Comfort than the worst; for there is nothing but Necessity as to both; and this is all the Reason can be given if that Doctrine be true. But a wise Providence makes the Condition of a good Man far better; because he hath Comfort in looking back upon his Actions; and Comfort in looking up to God as the Supreme Director of all for wise and good ends. It is observable, that when the stoical Moralists, speak of Patience under Troubles they magnifie Providence; but when they speak like Naturalists they are all for Fate; and they cannot reconcile these together any other ways, than by saying, that they speak popularly in one, and like Philosophers in the other.

*Senec. de Prov. c. 2. 4. Nat. Quest. l. 2. c. 3.*

2. That the Doctrine of Fate yields more Comfort to bad than to good Men. For bad Men under Troubles are very willing to believe that they did not bring their Calamities upon themselves, but that it was their Fate, and they could not help what depends on Causes out of their Power. They are very willing to believe that they are born down by a violent Tide, which it is impossible for them to withstand; because this lessens their Faults and stops the Mouth of Conscience, which else would upbraid them with their wilful Enormities; and they are pleased with enjoying all the Pleasures of Liberty, and then thinking they had none. And this both Ancient and Modern Philosophers have observed to be the true Reason, why this Doctrine hath been so popular, because the People think that their Faults are excused by it; at least it takes away the most troublesome Aggravation of their Sins, *viz.* that they are committed wilfully and of free Choice.

*Alex. Aphrad. de Fato Bernier de la Fort. & Destiny. p. 80.*

2. The Doctrine of Providence tends much more to our Support under Troubles; there are three things which support our Minds most, which depend wholly upon God's Providential Care; and those are,

1. That either God will deliver us out of them, or support us under them, and make us better by them. And either of these two affords true Foundation of Comfort: For, if he delivers, we have what we wished for; if he doth not, we may have what is better, *i. e.* our Minds more improved in Patience, Humility, Resignation to the Will of God, and a Resolution to depend upon him. This is that which the Psalmist encourages so much to, which he calls *Trusting in God*, and bids those who do so *rejoice*, and be confident in his Mercy and Goodness; because he will be their *Defence and Salvation*. But the Scripture still puts a great difference as to the Evil and Good, with respect to Comfort and Protection; and so our Saviour and his Apostles very much excite all true Christians to rejoice and to be thankful, because of the watchful Eye and Care of Providence towards them; for his Eyes are over the Righteous, and his Ears are open to their Cry; but the Face of the Lord is against them that do evil. So that with respect to Providence Consideration tends very much to our Support; but not with respect to Fate, for it is better not to think at all, than to think to no purpose. And if there be such a thing as Fate, Reason and Consideration are

*Pf. 5. 114. 7. 10. 10. 17. 32. 19. 23. 24. Prov. 1. 32. John 14. 15. 19. 20. 1 Pet. 3. 12.*

very impertinent things, and add more to the Trouble than to the Comfort of living: Nature had been much kinder to have made us insensible of Pain, than to give us such tender apprehensions of it, and no remedy against it. In this case Opiates are beyond the strongest Reason; for the less Sense of what is painful the better, unless there be something to support the Mind under it; for a Fatality of Causes and a thinking Faculty are very ill put together. It is like the Torment of *Regulus* keeping our Eyes open while the Sun scorches them. We had better be wholly blind, than only see enough to make us more miserable.

2. That God will give strength suitable to our Trials. For it is part of the Gospel Promise, *That God will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear: That his Grace is sufficient for us*, and that upon our due Applications, he will give *Grace to help in time of need*. And from hence are so many Incouragements to Prayer; and not to give over or faint in it; because the effectual fervent Prayer of a Righteous Man availeth much. What a support and comfort is this under Troubles to have an infinite Being ready to assist, and help, as well as to pity us under them! But the Stoicks could not but have mean Thoughts of Prayers and Supplications; *Seneca* calls them *agræ mentis solatia*; the Comforts of weak Minds, for saith he, *The Fates are not moved by Prayers and Pity, but things go on in an inflexible Course; like a Torrent that never stops for any Intreaties, nor can be hindred by any Force. And if any one think to be the better for his Prayers or Sacrifices, it is a sign of his Ignorance*. Is it any wonder then, that he should bid his wise Man to neglect Prayer, *non sunt ad Cælum elevandæ manus*, &c. And yet the natural Sence of Devotion prevailed upon some of the greatest of them to think better of Prayer. As *Epictetus* bids Men call upon God to assist them in their Difficulties. But if there be an inexorable Fate, what can Prayer signify? Men may make a Complement of Fate, as *Cleanthes* did in his celebrated Hymn. *Ἄγος δὲ*, &c. but it can be no more than a Complement: *Lead me whither thou pleasest, I am ready to follow*, &c. and the Complement was rather to himself than to *Jupiter*. *Antoninus* encourages Men to pray for the best things; for a good Temper of Mind rather than Health or Prosperity. You may say, these things which relate to our Minds are in our own Power; but how dost thou know that the Gods cannot, *σὺ λαμβάνειν*, give thee Assistance as to thy inward Passions; try thou, and observe the Issue. But *Antoninus* seems rather to believe a merciful Providence than fatal Necessity; and Prayer is very reconcileable to one, but not to the other.

3. That God will make abundant Recompence in another Life for the greatest Troubles of this. Our Saviour and his Apostles deliver this with so much Assurance, that they bid their Disciples *Rejoyce in tribulations, because great is their reward in heaven*. But Christianity seems to exceed in this matter, pronouncing them *happy that suffer persecution for righteousness sake*; but it is not a present Happiness they are to enjoy here; but the Sense is that the expectation of a glorious Reward is so great, so certain, so near, that they have reason to think themselves happy, who are so sure of it, and so nigh unto it.

But what is it which the *Stoicks* offer to make their wise Man happy under Troubles; it lay in these two things.

1. *That Virtue is a Reward to it self, which in some Sense is true, viz. That were there no other Reward to be expected, it were better to be virtuous than not; and that it tends more to a Man's real Happiness than*

any



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# SERMON XLVI.

## THE ADVANTAGES OF CHRISTIANITY

As to the  
Way to Happiness.

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### PART VI.

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St. JOHN VI. 68.

*Thou hast the Words of Eternal Life.*

I Have made it my Design in several Discourses,

1. To shew the Capacity of Men's Souls for Eternal Life.
2. The great Advantage we have by the Doctrine of Christ, as to a real Happiness.

To make out this latter, I propos'd this Method,

1. To consider the several Schemes of Happiness which were in the greatest vogue in the World among Men of Sense.
2. To shew the particular Advantage Christianity hath above them, even as to this Life.

I have already gone through both the *Aristotelian* and *Stoick Hypotheses*; I now come to the third and last which is of those who supposed *Pleasure to be the Chief Good or Happiness of Mankind, and that Virtue was subservient to it.* Herein, I shall observe this Method.

- (1.) To state their *Hypothesis* truly.
- (2.) To shew the Defects of it.
- (3.) The great Advantages of Christianity as to the *true Pleasure of Life.*

- (1.) As to the true state of their *Hypothesis.* We are to consider,
  - (1.) That

(1.) That they thought no Pleasure could make a Man happy, which had not Wisdom to govern it. And therefore they were forced to cut off all the extravagant Pleasures of vicious and debauched Persons; because such as these did overthrow the very Foundation of their Happiness, as to Health of Body and Tranquility of Mind. It was not merely to avoid the *Odiun* of broaching a loose and effeminate Doctrine, that *Epicurus* sometimes delivered grave and sober Advices, which tended to keep his followers within the rules of Temperance; but it was from the balancing the Pains and Pleasures of Life together; and finding that the Excess of Pleasure did bring an Excess of Pain after it; he saw it was necessary to preserve the Pleasure of Life, to abate all such as tended to destroy the Body, which he made the *Basis* of it. And so it was no regard to Virtue for it self, but as it served to preserve Health, and to keep off Pain. According to the Picture of *Cleanthes*, wherein Pleasure was represented as a Queen, and Virtue as a Handmaid attending on her. But still Virtue was thought necessary to Happiness, though but as an Attendant upon it, and an Instrument to promote it. So that intemperate and debauched Persons were excluded from any pretence to Happiness, even by those who placed it in meer Pleasure. It is true, the very Name of Pleasure made the School of *Epicurus* popular above all others; for those who resolved to pursue their Pleasures, were glad to have the Name of a Philosopher on their side. And this brought a mighty Dis-reputation upon him among those who were more inclined to Virtue, and he is charged, especially by the *Stoicks*, with giving too great Countenance to Debauchery. But it cannot be denied, that his Maxims were against it, and that he thought it necessary for a Man to govern his Pleasures that would be happy in them. For, since it was impossible to keep off the dreadful Effects of inordinate Pleasures, he made it necessary to be wise in the Choice and Pursuit of them.

(3.) That they did not place the Happiness of Life in that Pleasure which was *in Motu*, i. e. in particular Acts; but in a State or permanent Condition of Pleasures. There had been some who were called *Cyrenaicks*, who went no farther than the gross Pleasures of Sense; but their Doctrine was rejected by the *Epicureans*, who refined the Notion of Pleasure, and took away the pretence of Happiness from the grosser Acts, and fixed it in something which seemed more capable of bearing it, which was not of such a Volatile Nature, but had something which seemed more solid and durable. And that was in an ease and pleasant Condition of Life, free from Cares and Fears, and Pains, and inward Disturbance. They thought it necessary to be gentle and kind to others for their own Security; to make as many Friends and as few Enemies as they could; not to be involved or concerned in Publick Affairs, not to desire more than tended to their own Ease; to enjoy the Society of their Friends, without the Impertinencies of others, to keep off Pains and Diseases as long as they could, and when they could not any longer, to comfort themselves, that if Pain were great it could not hold long, and if it were long, it could not be great; to look on Death as that which put an end to all, and therefore they were not to be disturbed about it. These were some of the principal of those Maxims, which they thought so necessary to the Happiness of Life.

(2.) But I now come to shew the Defects of this *Scheme*; which will appear by these things:

(1.) In that it places the Happiness of Life in following our Natural Inclination

Inclination more than Reason. The great Foundation they went upon was this, that every Being that hath Sense naturally loves to please it self, and pleasure is that which is most desirable, and is chosen for its own sake; and therefore this is the first and chief Good, which belongs to it. But those who justly set up Virtue above Pleasure objected, that this was to make a Standard of our Happiness, which was common to the Brutes with us, and consequently, this was to sink humane Nature, rather than to advance it. And the Beasts have in this respect the Advantage of Mankind, that their Pleasures are more easie and vigorous, and not corrupted by so many Passions as those of Mankind, nor bring so many Diseases after them. For, the Faculties we have above them, rather tend to lessen, than to increase the Happiness which follows meer natural Inclination; for, to consider, and reason, and search into things, doth not add the least Pleasure to sensual Appetites, but only puts Men into a state of inward War and perpetual Opposition, between Reason and Inclination. Whereas the Brutes pursue their Desires without any such Checks or Controuls within, and so their Pleasures are more easie and free from Disturbance, they have no superstitious Fears, as to invisible Powers; (which the *Epicureans* thought such Enemies to the Tranquillity of Life;) they have no Notions of Good and Evil; of Right and Wrong; of Honourable and Dishonourable; of Wise and Foolish to disturb them; so that if the Pleasure of natural Inclination be that, wherein the Happiness of Life consists, the Beasts have much the Advantage of Mankind.

(2.) It makes the higher and nobler Faculties in us subservient to the meaner and lower; which is against the order of Nature. The *Epicureans* do not go about to deny, that there is a Mind in us, as well as Body; for, they say the Pleasure of the Mind exceeds that of the Body; this being only a present satisfaction, but the Mind can treasure up Pleasures for the future, and recover them when they are past, and entertain it self with them in the midst of Pains; all which must argue a Faculty in us far above the sensual Appetite. But to what purpose doth it serve? Is it only to contrive for the Body; and to be a Store-house to lay up its Pleasures in, when they are over. This is so mean an Employment for the Mind, that it had been less dishonourable to have denied it, than thus to debase it. And herein the *Stoicks* had extremely the Advantage of the *Epicureans*, when they both appealed to the first Inclinations of Nature. For they said, we are to consider Mankind, as having a Power to consider, to reason, to judge, to chuse what is most proper and agreeable to it; and that is their Notion of Vertue, which they set up as the Empress of all. And this is much more suitable to the Excellencies of humane Nature, than the *Epicurean* Doctrine of *Pleasure*.

(3.) It lays no foundation for Peace and Tranquillity of Mind.

There were two sorts of Passions which they looked on, as the great Disturbers of humane Life.

(1.) Unnecessary Desires. (2.) Superstitious Fears. But they could afford no Arguments to satisfy a wise Man as to either of these.

(1.) As to unnecessary Desires. They could easily discern, that giving liberty to Desires of things unnecessary to Life, was inconsistent with that Tranquillity which was necessary to the Happiness of Life. Those things, which were necessary were few and easie to be had; but if Men give way to the Desires of things unnecessary, there was no bound to be set to them; and all the Disturbances of Life do arise from them;

them; not only with respect to others, but to our selves too. So that a wise Man must cut off such Desires to enjoy the Pleasure of Life. But supposing meer Pleasure to be the end of Life, there can be no sufficient Reason to restrain Men's Desires, as to unnecessary things. For,

(1.) The Desires of such things are natural though not necessary; and if there be a greater Pleasure conceived in such things, for what reason should such Desires be so restrained? Nature hath afforded great plenty of Delights in things not necessary; and if the Inclination of Nature to Pleasure be the fundamental Reason, why Happiness is placed in it, then why should Men be debarred seeking their Happiness in such things to which their Inclination doth violently carry them? For they will say, they do but follow Nature in so doing;

(2.) If there be no real Evil in such Desires, then there is nothing to hinder the pursuit of them, but inconveniency. And of this every Man is left to be Judge as to himself; for, there is no standing Rule of Conveniencies. And therefore if one judges any kind of Pleasure to be convenient, there can be no sufficient Reason to hinder him from it. And thus Men are allowed to pursue all convenient Pleasures, altho' not necessary.

(3.) Suppose Men will make another Balance as to Pleasure and Pain; what should hinder them from acting according to it? *i. e. Epicurus* thought it the best way to have less Pleasure, and less Pain; but these are for more Pleasure, though it hath more Pain. I do not see, but upon those Principles these may justify themselves, as well as the other. And if their Life be shorter, they are contented as long as it is the sweeter.

(4.) The keeping themselves within Bounds cannot prevent Pains, and those some of the greatest; as *Epicurus* himself complained, he had such sharp and exquisite Torments as Humane Nature could hold out no longer under. Then if such Restraints cannot keep off Diseases and Pains, these Arguments can never be sufficient to justify such Restraints; or to make it necessary for Men to keep within the necessary Desires of Nature; since as great Pains may follow those who do, as those who do not.

(5.) There are some unnecessary Desires, which are attended with no sensible Inconveniency, which yet all Mankind condemn. As getting an Estate by unjust Means and secret Fraud, which may be so managed, as it may not be possible to discover it. Here is a very unreasonable desire, and here is a great Conveniency to a Covetous Person following it; yet the thing is such as all the World would condemn the doer of it. And therefore there must be some other measure and rule of Actions, besides Pleasure and Conveniency.

(6.) If there be nothing to fear after this Life; what need any such Restraint, as to Men's Desires here, if there be nothing but Pleasure to be regarded in it? For, why should Men be debarred the Pleasure of their own Choice? And *Epicurus* himself, as *Cicero* observes, did at last yield, that he had nothing to say against the most voluptuous Life; if they could set any Bounds to it, and free themselves from the Fear of the Gods, and of Death and Pain. So that really his Principles, notwithstanding all the Apologies made for them, did in their natural and just Consequences tend to debauch and corrupt Mankind. And the *Stoicks* had very good reason to expose them. For, as it is said on one side, that the *Stoicks* charged them with such things as they did not

own; so it ought to be observed on the other, that those who instil bad Principles into Men's Minds do not love to do it openly and barefaced, but to make them seem plausible to the World; and therefore we may justly think, that the Masters of such Schools understood the Consequences well enough themselves, but were unwilling to bear the Reproach of them. And therein *Seneca* was much mistaken, when he said, *That the Epicurean Sect seemed to be voluptuous, but was severe*; whereas in truth, the Appearance of such Precepts is only severe, but the secret Doctrine and Consequence very loose and pernicious. As will appear more,

S. r. *Epiſt.*  
97.

(7.) By denying any such thing as Vertue to be chosen for it self; without which it is impossible to restrain Desires and to keep them within their due Bounds. This *Epicurus* did not stick to own, *That there was no such thing as Good and Evil in it self*; and even *Seneca* owns this to have been his Doctrine; and that it was Fear which kept Men from wicked Actions. So that it seems, there can be no real Restraint upon such Persons, but what the Fear of Punishment lays upon them. And therefore whatever Wickedness may be committed in secret they can have no Restraint powerful enough to keep them from. And this Principle alone, that there is no such thing in Nature, as Vertue and Vice, doth so much tend to the debauching Mankind, that all the particular Advices given after it, is but like giving their Poison in a wholesom Liquor.

(2.) As to superstitious Fears, the *Epicureans* owned, That if there were a Providence, it was a vain thing in them to pretend to Tranquillity of Mind; but their Notion was, that the Divine Being was so happy in it self as not to be concerned about the Actions or Conditions of Men. And therefore they looked on all Acts of Religion as proceeding from a vain and superstitious Fear.

That which I am now to shew is, That it was a vain and unreasonable Undertaking of theirs, to go about to root the Seeds of Religion out of Men's Minds. For they still supposed that nothing but Ignorance and Fear were the Causes of Religion. It is true, *Epicurus* doth assert the Being of a God by way of *Anticipation*; and he rejects the Popular Notions concerning the Divine Nature, and among these, he takes away Providence, and undertakes to give Reasons of things without it, that he might take away all Fear with respect to God. But that this was a foolish Undertaking will appear by these things;

(1.) Men's Opinion of God he grants to be Natural and Universal; and so was the Opinion of Divine Providence. Some think he asserted a Deity only to please the People and to avoid Envy; but why then should he not as well have asserted Providence, which the People as firmly believed as they did a Deity? Why did he reject the popular Opinions concerning the Gods? Which they were as much concerned for, as they were for the Gods themselves. Let us then suppose, that he did in earnest believe a Deity; we are now to consider how he could think to root out the Fear of him out of Men's Minds; when the Fear was as natural and universal as the Belief of a God. For which there was this evident proof, that they manifested this Fear by Religious Worship. *Epicurus* proved his *Anticipation* as to the Being of God by *universal Consent*, and why then will it not hold as well, as to his Providence, since no Nation can be instanced in which believed a God, which did not think fit to worship him? How came Mankind to be so  
right



right in one and so much mistaken in the other? Nay, it were hardly possible to prove the universal Consent of Mankind, as to the Being of God, but by the universal Practice of Religious Worship. For the Sense of their Minds is discovered by such external Actions. If therefore the Notion of Providence be as universal as that of the Deity there is no reason to embrace one and to reject the other.

(2.) The assigning the natural Causes of things, doth by no means overthrow Providence; unless it be proved that Providence cannot make use of such Means to produce such Effects. What then doth it signify towards removing the Fear of a Deity to assign the immediate Causes? It may signify something to those who understood so little, as to attribute natural Effects to immediate Providence, to rectify their mistaken Notion as to such particular things; but in general, it only shews, that there is a regular and ordinary course of Nature: but, how doth it appear from hence, that there is not a Superior Providence, which directs and orders all these things, but yet so, as to take particular notice of the Affairs of Men; and to reward the Good and to punish the Wicked?

(3.) It is not enough to remove Fear, to shew how a thing may be, or is produced; but it must be proved, that it cannot be done any other way. For to remove all Fear, they must prove that impossible which they are afraid of. And this was a thing impossible to be done. For, to instance in one of the most terrible Effects of Nature, and which hath had greatest Effects on Men's Minds to possess them with Fear; inso-much as those that have contemned Religion at other times, have trembled at that; I mean, Thunder and Lightning: Suppose now, we can give a true natural Cause of it from the nature of the Exhalations and the Compression of the Clouds; yet this doth not remove the Cause of Fear as to a Deity. For, why may not an infinitely wise and powerful Being have put things into such an order as they are now in; and appoint natural Causes to produce their Effects, but still under his superintendency and particular Care? And if there be such a Providence of God above all Natural Causes, what doth the assigning those Causes signify towards the taking away the Fear of a Deity?

*Suet. Calig.*  
c. 57.

(4.) It is of greatest Consequence in this matter, not to look into immediate and natural Causes, but into the first and original Cause of all things. For, if there must be a first Cause which gave Being and Motion to that Matter out of which this visible World was made; then we ought to have a mighty regard to such an infinitely wise and powerful Being. And although the *Epicureans* might talk plausibly concerning particular Causes and Events; yet when they undertake to give an Account of the first beginning of things, they reason so foolishly and inconsiderately, as no Man of Sense can be satisfied with what they say. And yet here lies the main point; for if there be a God, which made the World, we can have no reason to think, he would not concern himself about the Work of his Hands.

(5.) What is the Reason that Men in all this time have not been able to shake off these Fears of Invisible Powers? It is about 2000 Years since the pretended Rescuer of Mankind from the Slavery of Religion appeared; and yet they are as far from being delivered as ever. There have been many things discovered since that time, and the World is well satisfied about them. No one now disputes, whether the Torrid Zone be inhabited; or whether there be *Antipodes* or not. Why is it

not thus about the Fear of a Deity? Why are not Men agreed in this matter? The *Greek* and *Roman* Superstitions are worn out of the World; the Pagan Deities, which they worshipp'd, are long since forgotten. All their Oracles are ceased; and the Methods of Divination by Sacrifices laid aside. But still the Fear of a Deity keeps up in Men's Minds; although wicked Men would be glad to be rid of it. Why cannot they shake off this as they do many other things? How many have striven with themselves in order to it; but yet the thoughts of God would return upon them, whether they would or not? Must we resolve all this, into an unaccountable Fear? If so, then it is a vain thing to pretend to subdue it. But we see, vain Fears may be shaken off. Men are not afraid of things, which they dreaded when they were Children. But here the Case is otherwise. The best, the wisest, and the most considering Men have agreed in the just cause of this Fear; and the most vain, rash, and opinionative Men have been those who have opposed or disputed it. Although the Opinion of a Multitude be not in it self very considerable; yet in this Case it deserves to be regarded; because the Opinions of the wisest joyn with them; and in this matter they believe what they have generally no mind to believe, if they could help it; and all the Arts of those who have gone about to undeceive them have not been able to prevail upon them. Even in *Athens* it self we do not read of one Altar less for the sake of the School of *Epicurus*. If it be said, that the Stream of popular Opinions was too strong for him; I ask, whence it came to pass, since Mankind is so fond of Liberty, especially in such things? It is a wonder to me, that such a Doctrine did not much more prevail, considering its agreeableness to Men's Inclinations, and the great disadvantages of Religion at that time. So that, if there were not some more powerful Impression of God and Providence on Mankind, the *Epicurean* Doctrine might have overturned all Religion at that time in the World. But there were some who undertook the Cause of Vertue and Religion against them; by which means the falseness and meanness of their Principles were laid open. Which could never carry Men to do any great or brave Action, but confined themselves to the Enjoyment of their Pleasures in their own Cloysters and Gardens. And their Notions of such Vertues which they allowed, were so selfish, that they durst not openly own and avow them, for fear of being hated and despised by the rest of Mankind. For, whatever they sometimes pretend, they looked on Vertue as an idle Name, and valued all things as they tended to their own Interest and Pleasure. Thus I have shewed that the *Epicurean* Principles could lay no Foundation of Peace and Tranquility of Mind.

(3.) I now proceed to shew the great Advantages of Christianity above this Scheme, as to the true Pleasure of Life. Which I shall make out by these two Considerations.

(1.) What Pleasure of Life is allowed by it.

(2.) What Pleasures are advanced by it.

(1.) What Pleasure of Life is allowed by it. The Christian Doctrine doth not discard all kind of Pleasure here, although its Design be to take us off from the Fancy of any Happiness to be enjoyed here. It represents it as a very dangerous thing for Persons to aim at a voluptuous Life here; for such are said to receive their good things in this Life. As though this were the Happiness they had chosen, and therefore must not look for another. And by the Rules of Christianity all unlawful Pleasures

Pleasures are most strictly forbidden; such as Gluttony, Drunkenness, Riot, Wantonness, and all kind of Lasciviousness; as things practised by the Gentiles, but utterly unlawful to Christians. But yet such Pleasures of Life as are consistent with Sobriety, Temperance, Goodness and Charity, the Christian Religion no where forbids, but encourages Men *to rejoyce always*, so it be within such Bounds. Christianity doth no where forbid Pleasure for it self, but for the Vices which accompany it. But to speak more distinctly; there are three sorts of Pleasures to be considered;

(1.) Of Nature. (2.) Of Sin. (3.) Of Vertue.

(1.) There are the Pleasures of Nature; which arise from the Satisfaction of Natural Appetites; such as Hunger and Thirst are. No one can dispute concerning these; for then it were unlawful to be hungry or thirsty, since the Pleasure is much greater to those who eat only when they are hungry, or drink when they are thirsty; and even *Epicurus* thought scarce any Pleasure did exceed these; and are certainly far beyond the Pleasures of Luxury and Intemperance. But no one questions the lawfulness of such sensual Pleasures as these. And what other Inclinations are natural, God hath not wholly forbid them, but set reasonable Bounds and Restraints upon them. To find fault with Pleasure for it self, is to quarrel with Nature and Providence. For, as long as there are such natural Appetites, the Satisfaction of them cannot be without sensible Pleasure. *Aristotle* observes, that some condemned all kind of Pleasure, as the most effectual way to keep Men within the Bounds of Vertue; because they are so exceedingly prone to follow after Pleasures, and therefore they thought it the best way to bend them to the other extreme, so to bring them to a Mediocrity; but saith he, *this is not the best way*. For, if Men's Actions be not suitable to their Words, and they be found secret lovers of Pleasures themselves, Men suspect their Doctrine and hate their Hypocrisie: *Therefore plain Truth*, saith he, *is not only best for Knowledge, but for Practice too*. For, those whose Actions and Words agree, are soonest believed and followed. *Epicurus* puts a difference between the Pleasures of Nature and the Pleasures of Opinion; the former, saith he, make no such mischief and disturbance in the World as the latter do. He that aims only at satisfying his Natural Appetites and Necessities, as to Eating, Drinking, Cloathing, Habitation, Marriage, &c. enjoys his Pleasure without Injury to others; but when they once come to fancy other things beyond these, then Luxury, Ambition, Lust, &c. carry Men to such things which make the Lives of others; as well as their own to be uneasy to them. But as to Natural Pleasures there are two sorts.

(1.) Such as consist in a suitableness to our Nature; as in supplying the Necessities of Nature where there is some Pain going before, as in Hunger and Thirst; which *Aristotle* calls a *Restitution of Nature*; for, there is a sort of Violence upon it when we want those things which it calls for; as in the parts of the Stomach and about it, in Hunger and Thirst; but there is a natural Pleasure arising from the agreeableness of things where there is no supply of something deficient. As in the Delights of some of the Senses, as Seeing, Hearing, Smelling; and therefore the Pleasures of Nature are not to be confined to Supplies only, as *Aristotle* observes; and it is not only true of our Senses, but in the Pleasures of the Mind, as in Mathematical Speculations; the Pleasures of Hopes and Remembrance. So that here are natural Pleasures which have nothing

nothing in them, but a suitability or agreeableness to the present frame of Mankind, as made up of Soul and Body united together.

(2.) There are natural Pleasures which lie in avoiding what is painful and disagreeable to us, not merely with respect to our Bodies but to our Minds too. If we can by Care keep our Bodies from Pain, that no doubt is a natural Pleasure; for Health and Ease are the most valuable Pleasures of the Body though they make not so great a Noise. If a Man doth so much study his own Body and natural Constitution, as to preserve himself thereby from painful Diseases, he takes great care of the true Pleasure of his Life, but he doth nothing sinful or unworthy a wise Man therein, or unbecoming Religion. Not merely because Temperance is a Vertue, but because Health and freedom from Pain, are in themselves desirable things. He is certainly to blame, who makes this the chief business and end of his Life, to be at ease and to enjoy himself; but he that neglects no necessary Duty, nor commits any Sin to avoid Pain, is no more to blame than for desiring to sleep in quietness when he is gone to Bed. Who can think him to blame, that desires to avoid restless Nights and disturbing Dreams? A great many of the Troubles of Life, are but a sort of Dreams and the unquietness of Imagination. And it can be no fault in any Man, to live as composedly and free from disturbance as may be.

There are some who think, that Religion is inconsistent with any natural Pleasure or Ease; that it puts Men upon such Austerities and continual Hardships, as if God envied Mankind any such thing as Pleasure of Life, or the enjoying that Ease and Rest, which our Natures are inclined to; and therefore they account it a Duty of Religion to *cross our natural Inclinations* in innocent things. To these I answer,

(1.) This argues mean and unworthy Apprehensions of God. The Heathens had some of them a strange Opinion of God, *viz.* that he would not suffer any to enjoy any great Pleasure in Life, but they must have Crosses proportionable to them. But their Opinion went only to extraordinary Cases; whereas, this seems to make God to envy us the most natural and easy Delights of Life. If it be displeasing to God that we should be pleased our selves; then he must be pleased to see us torment our selves; which is not consistent with that just Apprehension we ought to have of the Goodness, and Mercy and Pity, and Tenderneſs of God towards his Creatures.

(2.) This argues false Notions of Religion; as though that consisted rather in crossing Inclinations because they are *natural*, than because they are *sinful*. Our Religion lies in observing the Rules which God hath set us, and not in making new ones our selves. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good.* We are too apt to be deceived our selves and therefore God directs us. But what then is it which he hath shewed us? Is it to offer to him the Fruit of our Body for the Sin of our Soul. Is it to lash our selves till the Blood runs faster than our Tears? Is it to wear away our Flesh with Hardships; and to deny our selves the common Refreshments of Nature? No; but it is to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. These indeed are excellent Duties and becoming God to require and us to perform; but to macerate and torment our selves in hopes to please God, is to offer him a Sacrifice of our own Flesh; and to hope to have our Sins expiated by our own Blood.

(3.) The great Master of our Religion neither taught nor practised any such Doctrine. If we hope to come to Heaven it must be in that way

way, which himself hath prescribed us. For he is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*. Observe then, the course of his Life; it was remarkable as for the Innocency, so for a Freedom from any singularity this way. *The Son of Man came eating and drinking*. Not to encourage Men to Matt. ii. 39. Luxury and Intemperance; but that Men should not think the Christian Religion lay in meet bodily Austerities; but he often tells his Disciples the main of it lay *in the Love of God, and the Love of our Neighbour; in Faith, Judgment, Mercy and Charity.*

(4.) Hardship to the Body is not commended by Religion for its own sake, but as it is an Instrument of Vertue in particular cases: If there be great occasion of Prayer and Humiliation before God, then Fasting is a proper means for it; not that God takes pleasure in denying our selves a Meals Meat; but that we are not so fit to perform those solemn Duties when we are full; and we shew thereby a greater regard to Religion than to our natural Appetites. But in case that fulness of Body makes the desires of the Flesh unruly, then *Abstinence* becomes a *Duty* that *the Flesh may be subdued to the Spirit*; which is a great and true Instance of the Power of Religion; which is to keep under the irregular motions of our Flesh, and to follow the conduct of the Divine Spirit.

(2.) There are the Pleasures of Sin; *i. e.* the Pleasures which Men take in doing things that are evil. Not that the things are therefore evil, because they take pleasure in doing them; but the things being evil, the pleasure must be sinful. If the thing be good, it is so much better if we take pleasure in it; therefore it is not the pleasure in it self which is evil, but as it is joyned with things that are evil. If the pleasure depends upon a false Opinion, or an unreasonable Desire, then the pleasure is sinful, as flowing from a vicious habit and corrupt inclination. *Aristotle* observes, that *such are not real Pleasures but Imaginary*; Ethic. I. 10. c. 3. no more than a thing is really bitter, which a diseased person apprehends to be so. The case of Riches and Pleasures, saith he, is alike in this; Riches may be desirable, but not in an unjust manner; not by betraying our Friend or our Country. There are some things so bad, saith he, that no Man should take pleasure in them, although he were sure there were no pain to follow after them. Wherein he doth much exceed the balance of *Epicurus*; and concludes Vertue to be desirable for it self although there were no Pleasure in it.

(3.) There are the Pleasures of vertuous and good Actions. Else *Solomon* had little reason to say, *Her ways are ways of pleasantness*, speaking of that Wisdom, which lies in the practice of Vertue and Religion. Prov. 3. 17. And this is not merely a sort of negative Pleasantness, which lies in avoiding the Troubles and Disturbances which follow evil Actions; but there is a positive and real Pleasure which follows the practice of this true Wisdom. For here we must not suppose Vertue without Religion, nor Religion without Vertue; but the practice of both these joined together. And therefore we do not speak of the first Beginnings; nor of sudden Heats, nor of uncertain Resolutions; but of a Mind well-settled and confirmed in the practice of both. And that such have a Foundation of truer Pleasure than the *Epicureans* themselves on their own Principles, I shall now prove.

(1.) That which is most desirable for it self is the Foundation of the truest Pleasure. For, this was the great Ground they went upon, that Pleasure did appear to all sensible Beings to be most desirable for its own sake; but still they granted, that the Happiness of Life must suppose  
Wisdom

Wisdom in governing that which was so desirable for it self; and therefore they excluded all extravagant livers from a possibility of Happiness. If therefore Religion puts Men upon a wiser Government of themselves, and doing things more excellent in themselves, then this Pleasure must exceed that, which goes no farther than meer natural Desires or freedom from bodily Pain. The great Duties of Religion are the Service of God, the forsaking our Sins, and doing the most vertuous Actions. But to any one that considers, these cannot but appear to be most desirable for themselves.

(1.) As to the Service of God. That which lies in Adoration is confessed by *Epicurus* to be a thing very fitting in it self, because of the Excellency of the Divine Nature; but why our Worship of him by Prayer and Praises should be less fitting is impossible for us to understand, who think it most unreasonable to assert the Being of God and to deny his Providence. What can be more agreeable to Creatures than to serve their Maker and to delight in his Service? We see that others who think they serve a good Master, not only do what he requires, but do it chearfully, and delight to be in his presence; why should not we much rather do it with respect to God, whose Goodness is infinitely greater, and whose Service far more desirable?

(2.) The forsaking our Sins, is no more than retrenching our unreasonable Desires; not for so mean an end, as to avoid some bodily pain; but to avoid the displeasure of God and to return to the paths of Wisdom. And they must allow it to be a wise thing for a debauched person to recover himself in time; and to leave off his riotous courses that he may enjoy the true pleasure of Life; how much more then is it so to turn our selves from all love of Sin to the love of God?

(3.) The doing of vertuous and good Actions; the *Epicureans* granted such things were to be done for the sake of the pleasure that followed them. But the better any Actions are, the more they are to be done for their own sakes; and the greater is the pleasure of doing them.

Phil. 4. 8. But our Religion puts us upon all things that are *excellent and praise-worthy*; that gain Friends, and Interest, and Reputation; and that not for so mean an end, as thereby to get conveniencies to our selves; but to honour God, to do good, and to lay a foundation for an Eternal Happiness.

(2.) That which lays the foundation for the most lasting tranquility of Mind tends to the truest pleasure of Life. This is yielded by all the followers of *Epicurus*. And now let any one compare the Principles of Religion with his, he may easily see how mean and trifling his are in comparison with those of true Religion. He granted that it's impossible to be always here in the Enjoyment of actual Pleasure, but then he took care that tranquility of Mind might be preserved by reflection on Pleasures already past; or foresight of Pleasure to come when the pain was over. But on both these accounts the practice of true Religion doth very much exceed all that the *Epicureans* could please themselves in, either as to the pleasure of looking backwards or forwards.

(1.) As to the former. What a mean satisfaction is it to a Man's Mind, to reflect upon himself that he hath eaten and drank so as not to destroy his health; when at the same time he suffers under some very severe pains; or that he hath found out some Causes of things when he hath been grossly deceived about the first Cause of all things? Yet this was all *Epicurus* when he was dying, through the sharpness of pain,  
had

had to comfort himself with. But what another kind of satisfaction is it to a Man's Mind, to reflect upon himself, that he hath served God faithfully, and done his duty sincerely; that he hath endeavoured to make the World the better for his being in it? So St. Paul speaks, *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our Conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.* There is nothing bears up a Man's Mind with such support and comfort as the testimony of a good Conscience. It is some pleasure to look back on dangers past, and the deliverances and mercies we have enjoyed; but the comfort that we have not *shipwrackt Faith and a good Conscience* goes beyond the other; for herein we have an inward, a spiritual, a continuing Joy; a Joy which none can take from us; and the longer we have it, the greater it still grows. It is observed by Cicero that the Principle of *Epicurus* was such as he durst not own in publick, because it was *turpis Oratio, a reproachful Speech for one to say, that he aimed at nothing in his life but to please himself;* and as it is dishonourable to the World, so it is not very grateful to ones self, to have had no higher or better end than this. But those who seek to please God by serving him and doing good to the World, have no cause to be ashamed of their Principle, or to repent of their Practice. Since nothing can afford a Man truer satisfaction in this World; let the World be as it will, he hath something within him to support him. And the due fear and love of God goes farther towards it than all the most refined *Epicurism* could do upon the minds of those who triumphed over those who lived under the slavery of Superstition; as they accounted Religion no better. But this was a monstrous mistake in them; since true Religion alone can settle and compose the Mind, not by turning Providence out of the World; but by submitting to it, and depending upon it.

(2.) As to the pleasure of looking forwards. All that they could comfort themselves with, was that death would put an end to all; and then they should be, as if they had never been. But this they could not possibly be assured of; and therefore could never subdue their fears of death. But upon the Christian Doctrine the balance of Pleasure and Pain is much more considerable, and much more certain. For upon renouncing sinful Pleasures here, we not only avoid present but eternal Pains; and are assured to enjoy everlasting Pleasures. Who then can propose truer satisfaction to himself, than that which follows a good Conscience? Who can aim at greater Pleasure than that which not only carries one through this present state with the greatest contentment, but leads them to the possession of God as the greatest Good, *in whose presence is fulness of Joy, and at whose right hand are Pleasures for evermore.*

# SERMON XLVII.

Preached on

## WHIT-SUNDAY,

In the Year 1677.

I COR. II. 4.

*And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power.*

**I**F the Wisdom of Men had been to advise about the most effectual means to promote Christianity in the World, they would presently have consider'd what those things are, which are most likely to prevail on Mankind, and according to their several Inclinations would have made choice of one or other of them. Some would have been for the way of external Greatness and Power, as most apt to oversway the generality of Mankind, who judge more according to Interest than Truth, and hardly think that to be Reason or Demonstration which is not armed with *Power* to defend it self against all Opposers: Therefore, they would have thought the best way had been, for Christ himself to have appeared as a mighty Temporal Prince which would have presently engaged the whole Jewish Nation to him, and they to have sent his Ambassadors to the several Princes, and Governours of the World at their own Peril, to submit to his Authority; which there was so much reason for them all to do since he was *the promised Messias, the Prince and Saviour of the World, the Eternal Son of God, the Lord and Heir of all things*. For, now the time was come that *the Kingdoms of the Earth were to become the Kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christs, and the Heathen were to be his Inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the Earth his Possession*: Therefore it was but to lose time to treat any other way than with the Sword in their Hands, ready to force Submission where it was denied. Thus the Jews believe that when their *Messias* comes, he shall bring the World in subjection to him.

Others would have thought this an improper way of promoting Religion by the Power of the Sword, because that is more apt to affright than to convince Men; and the embracing Religion supposes the satisfaction of Men's Minds about it, and all *Power* doth not carry *Demonstration*



stration along with it; therefore such would have proposed the choosing out of Men of the finest Parts and best Accomplishments, who dispersing themselves into several Countries should by their Eloquence and Reason prevail on the more ingenious and capable sort of Men, who by degrees would draw all the rest after them. For if once Christianity were thought a matter of Wit and Reputation, those who did not understand it would pretend to it; for although nothing be more unequally distributed among Men than Understanding is, yet there is nothing Men are more unwilling to think they want an equal share of with the rest of Mankind. However, the mighty Influence of the enticing Words of Man's Wisdom, was then very well understood in all the Cities and Colonies of Greece and Rome: Eloquence and Philosophy were in so great Reputation, that there was no hopes of perswading Men to change their Opinions or Practices without one or both of these. And for any to hope to bring a new Religion into the World without the help of these was then thought as vain as for a Man to compass the World in a Ship without Masts or Sails.

Thus the Wisdom of Men would have judged; but the Wisdom of God made choice of ways directly contrary to these, he would not suffer his Truth to be so much beholding for its Reception, either to the Power or the Wit of Men. *For God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things to confound the strong, that no flesh should glory before him.* 1 Cor. 1. 27, 28, 29. And accordingly St. Paul declares, that his way of preaching was neither that of the Orators, nor of the Philosophers, but yet it was not without sufficient Reason to convince and satisfy their Minds, for although it were not with *the enticing Words of Man's Wisdom*, yet it was *with the Demonstration of the Spirit*, and of Power. In which words these two things deserve our Enquiry:

I. Why St. Paul doth so utterly renounce the enticing Words of Man's Wisdom in his Preaching?

II. What force did lie in that Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power which he thought sufficient to satisfy the Minds of Men without any additional helps from the Wisdom of Men?

1. Why St. Paul doth so utterly renounce the enticing words of Man's Wisdom? For, we are not to imagine it was any natural Incapacity, or want of Education which made him forbear them; or if these were supposed, the same Divine Spirit which furnished the Apostles with the Gift of Tongues, could as easily have accomplished them with an Eloquence above that of Cicero and Demosthenes; and with a subtilty of reasoning beyond that of Aristotle or Zeno: But the Apostle implies an unsuitableness in these enticing ways of Man's Wisdom to the Design of promoting the Christian Religion; what that was, I shall now more particularly search into.

1. As to the *enticing Words* of Persuasion.

2. As to the way and method of Reasoning, or *Man's Wisdom*.

1. As to the way of Eloquence then in so much Vogue and Esteem; called by St. Paul, v. 1. *the Excellency of Speech*: And what harm was there in that, that it could not be permitted to serve the design of the Gospel? Is not *the Excellency of Speech* a Gift of God, as well as Knowledge and Memory? What do all the Rules of Rhetoricians signify to one who hath not a natural Gift of Eloquence? For it hath been well

observed, that no Men reason worse than those who have Logick without Judgment; and none speak worse than those who speak by Rules, without natural Eloquence. And to those that have it all the Rules tend only to the better Improvement of what they have, and to make them more useful and acceptable to others. What is all the mighty force of Eloquence, but the strength of Reason adorned and set forth with the best Advantage? What are all the Instructions of Orators intended for, but to enable Men to speak clearly and fitly, and with all those Graces and Ornaments of Speech, which are most apt to move and persuade the Hearers? And what is there in all this disagreeable to the Design of the Doctrine of Christ? Are not the greatest and most weighty Concernments of Mankind fit to be represented in the most proper and clear Expressions, and in the most moving and affectionate manner? Why then should St. Paul be so nice and scrupulous about using the enticing Words of Man's Wisdom when they serve to so good an End? Supposing there were something of Artifice in it; yet doth he not elsewhere say, that he caught them with Guile; which shews that he did not stick at any artificial way, when he designed only to do them good.

2 Cor. 12.  
16.

To clear this matter we are to consider a two-fold Eloquence, the one gaudy and sophistical, the other sober and manly; the first of these the Apostle rejects, but not the other.

(1.) A gaudy sophistical Eloquence is wholly renounced by him; of which the Apostle seems particularly to speak, mentioning it under the Name of Ἀνθρώπινη σοφία, Man's Wisdom; which was in mighty Esteem among the Greeks, but suspected and cried down by wiser Men, as that which did only inveigle and beguile injudicious people: It consisted in an affected way of speaking with great readiness and plausibility upon any Subject or Occasion; and the Masters of it were called Sophists, and were looked on by the common people with great Admiration for their extempore way of speaking. The beginners of it were such as *Gorgias*, *Protagoras*, *Prodicus*, *Hippias*, *Polus* and others, who went about from place to place, and drew multitudes of People after them, who were bewitched by their enticing words, and they honoured them in the highest manner with golden Statues and rich Presents; and thus after by going from place to place they had brought themselves into great Reputation, they began to open their Schools, and professed to teach Men the Art to speak plausibly for or against any thing. Which made all those who had any Concernment for Virtue or true Knowledge to set themselves against the pernicious Design of these Sophists; which was to confound Truth and Falshood, and Virtue and Vice among the People, that they could not discern one from the other. From hence *Socrates* and *Plato* took all occasions to deride their Folly, and to expose the Mischief of their Design; and prudent Common-wealths did prohibit and banish them, as Disturbers of the publick Good of Societies. Notwithstanding which severity, there was always a Stock of them rising up for several Ages; and were much improved, when the School of *Plato* did degenerate into this sophistical way of Eloquence by the Doctrine of *Arcefilas* and *Carneades*, the former took away all Difference of Truth and Falshood, and the latter all Certainty in the Judgment of them. By this means Men of Wit and Parts were encouraged to find out Colours for every thing, and so they framed their Common Places to this purpose, by which they stocked themselves with such fair Pleas on every Occasion,

Occasion, and studied so much all the Arts of Insinuation, that their Auditors were easily deceived by them, if they were not Men of great Judgment and Sagacity. And the great Orator himself confesses the chief end of their popular Eloquence was so to move their Auditors, as to make them judge rather according to Passion than Reason; which was the great end of their studying so much the Passions of Men, and the ways of moving them; because more Men did judge according to them, than according to Law or Reason. This being the common end and design of the enticing Words of Man's Wisdom in the Apostles Age, had they not the greatest Reason to renounce the Methods of those whose great end was to deceive their Hearers by fair Speeches, and plausible Insinuations. For when the Apostles went up and down from City to City in Greece as the Sophists of old did, the People were ready to look upon them, as a new Race and Generation of them come out of the East, and therefore expected the same artificial way of speaking from them: But St. Paul tells the *Corinthians* they were mightily deceived in such an Expectation; for they were plain and honest Men, that had no such design to be admired or to enrich themselves, they only intended to convince them of a great Truth of high Importance to them, viz. that God sent his Son into the World to save it; but he met with so ill usage as to be Crucified, and although this seems a foolish, absurd and incredible Doctrine, yet he declares so much satisfaction as to the Truth of it, that he desired to know nothing else among them save Jesus Christ, and him Crucified; and to express this Knowledge, not in the enticing Words of sophistical Eloquence, but in the Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power.

(2.) The Apostle is not to be understood, as if he utterly renounced all sober and manly Eloquence. For that were to renounce the best use of Speech as to the convincing and persuading Mankind. Speech itself is one of the peculiar Excellencies of humane Nature; and the great Conveniency of civil Society; by that Men are apt to instruct, to direct, to convince, to comfort, to persuade one another; by that we enjoy the Benefit of others thoughts and communicate our own to them. And if there be one way of speaking better than another, more apt to please, to ravish, to move, to inflame, why should not this be esteemed a Gift of God which tends to the most useful Improvement of Speech? And what is true Eloquence, but speaking to the best Advantage? With the most lively Expressions, the most convincing Arguments, and the most moving Figures? What is there now in this, which is disagreeable to the most Divine Truths? Is it not fit they should be represented to our Minds in a way most apt to affect them? Can we do too much towards the Satisfaction of Mankind about the most weighty Matters? Or is it not fit to heighten and inflame Men's Souls with the Love of God and Goodness; and to raise in them an Abhorrence and Detestation of Sin? Where do we meet with higher Expressions, and more lofty Figures, than are to be found in Scripture? The Prophet *Isaiab* speaks often καὶ ὑπερῶν λόγῳ, which St. Paul here disavows, v. 1. after an extraordinary manner: And St. Paul himself though he hath no affected Cadencies, and doth not strictly observe the Rhetoricians Rules in the choice and placing of his words, yet there is a great deal of height in his Expressions, and force in his Reasonings, and sometimes a very artificial way of insinuation into the Minds of his Hearers. Witness his speech at *Athens* on occasion of the Inscription on the Altar to the unknown

known God, and his Apologies for himself to *Felix* and *Agrippa*. It was the Judgment of a great Critick concerning *St. Paul*, that he of all Men did seem to him to write, not with Pen and Ink but with his very Heart and Soul, and that he hath a comprehensive shortness and force of Expression in all his Writings, which shewed the fulness of his Mind; and that the Figure so often used by him not barely affirming things, but including the Causes and Properties which seems to make his Style more obscure, is very often used by the greatest Orators as *Thucydides* and *Demosthenes*. When therefore *St. Paul* rejects the enticing Words of Man's Wisdom, he is to be understood of the corrupt sophistical Eloquence then in vogue; and not of that which is most apt to convince and persuade Men.

2. As to the way and method of Reasoning. So some think these words are chiefly to be understood of the subtilty of disputing, because the Apostle brings in Demonstration as a thing above it. But this again seems very hard that the Use of Reasoning should be excluded from the way of propagating Christian Religion; which the Apostle never intended, for he offers a Demonstration to them, which is the strictest and closest, and most convincing way of reasoning.

But that which *St. Paul* rejects as to this was,

1. The way of wrangling and perpetual disputing, by the help of some Terms and Rules of Logick; so that they stuck out at nothing, but had something to say for, or against any thing. The Fruit of this kind of Logick, as *Erasmus* well saith, was rather keeping Men from holding their Peace, than enabling to discourse well. Such Men that are most versed in this disputing Faculty, are, saith he, like Fencers, whom one would think, when one sees them act their part on a Stage, to be the most skilful Fighters in the World, but none are observed to behave themselves worse in the Field, than these famous Combatants upon a Stage. No Man that understands the Laws of Reasoning can find fault with the methodizing our Conceptions of things, by bringing them under their due Ranks and Heads, nor with understanding the Difference of Causes, the Truth and Falshood of Propositions, and the way of discerning true and false Reasonings from each other. But Men were fallen into such a humour of disputing, that nothing would pass for Truth among them. Some pretended to Demonstrations where the things were incapable of them, and when others discerned the Sophistry of these pretended Demonstrations they fell into meer Scepticism; saying, that every thing might have as much said against it, as for it. Thus all was turned into disputing among them, and Men of the greatest Subtilty could not find any solid Ground to fix their Minds upon, because they could find no Representation of Truth so peculiar to it self, that Falshood might not appear under the same, so as not to be discerned by Men. And this was the Result of the long and tedious Disputes among the several Sects of Philosophers; the School of *Zeno* with all its Subtilties did but furnish the Scepticks with more Weapons against themselves; and every one almost knew how to disprove another without being able to resolve what he was to believe himself.

And therefore it was not fitting for the Apostles of Christ to make use of these baffled Methods of reasoning to confirm the Truth of what they delivered upon the Credit of Divine Revelation. It was a known saying of *Plato*, that we ought to believe the Sons of the Gods in what they affirm, although they speak without Demonstration. While *Plato* applied

*Erasm. Casaub. in Advers. MS.*

*Erasm. Eccl. 1. 2.*

*Plato Tim. p. 530. Ed.*

applied this to justify the Heathen Mythology it is certain he was mistaken, but however it affords us this reasonable ground of Faith; that in matters of Revelation no more Demonstration is necessary than what proves the Testimony to be from God. And therefore where Revelation was pretended, as it was by the Apostles, it was unreasonably done of *Galen* and others, who found fault with Christianity for want of Demonstration: *i. e.* such as proceeded in the Philosophical way; for this was unsuitable to the Nature of their Design, and if they gave sufficient Demonstration that they were sent from God, it was altogether sufficient for their purpose.

2. The way of meer humane reasoning, as it excludes Divine Revelation. These were the words of Man's Wisdom indeed; and if we observe the tenor of the Apostle's following Discourse, we shall find it was against that Wisdom of Men which was set up against Revelation. For the Apostle proves the necessity of God's revealing these things by his Spirit, *v. 10, 11, 12.* and then adds that their speaking was not after the didactic way of humane Wisdom, but of the Holy Spirit, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, *v. 13.* so that the words of humane Wisdom are such which stand in opposition to the Spirit of Revelation. Therefore saith he, *ψυχῆς ἀνθρώπου*, the Man that stands up for the natural sufficiency of the Soul without the Spirit of God in order to its own happiness, it is no wonder if he receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for how can he do it, since he denies the *κελήριον*, and the manner of judging these things, which must be spiritual. I do not deny but the words are capable of another meaning, and that the *ψυχῆς ἀνθρώπου* may signify a carnal Man that pursues his lusts; but the former sense is much more agreeable to the Apostle's scope, which was to shew the averseness that those Men had for Divine Revelation, who were at that time the greatest professors of Humane Wisdom. But he doth not renounce the way of reasoning in subordination to the Spirit of God, and this Revelation being acknowledged to be the rule of it: For that were to make our Religion indefensible against any Adversaries, and to betray the best Religion in the World to the contempt and reproach of Men, and to expose our Faith to the greatest absurdities which may ever be obtruded upon it under the notion of Divine Revelation. And so I come,

2. To enquire into the force of that Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power which the Apostle mentions as sufficient to satisfy the Minds of Men without the additional helps of humane Wisdom. Wherein are two things to be spoken to.

1. What is meant by the Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power?

2. Why this was not as liable to suspicion as the way of humane Wisdom? Wherein I must shew, what Demonstration was given by it, to assure Men of the truth of what the Apostles delivered.

1. What is meant by the Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power?

(1.) It must be something by way of proof, otherwise no Demonstration.

(2.) That proof must be Spiritual, because it is a Demonstration of the Spirit.

(3.) That Spiritual proof must be discerned by visible effects, otherwise though it might be the Demonstration of the Spirit, yet not of Power.

1. It must be something by way of proof of another thing, otherwise it could not bear the name of Demonstration. For whatever sense we take Demonstration in, it must imply something that doth prove another, by an evident Consequence. *Aristotle* allowed nothing else for Demonstration but what followed from necessary and immediate Principles, of which sort so very few things in the World are capable, which Men would desire to have demonstrated, that some have therefore said, all his discourse about it was vain and fruitless. And he himself grants many things are incapable of it; and he saith it is ignorance in Men to require Demonstration where the thing will not bear it; and that Men ought to be satisfied with such evidence or sufficient reason as the thing is capable of: *Κατὰ τὸν ὕλιν οἱ λόγοι ἀπειρητοί* is *Aristotle's* excellent rule; the Reasons of things ought to be according to their proper Nature. But according to the sense of other Philosophers, every good and sufficient proof was called a Demonstration. *Ἀποδείξις* is rendred by *Tully argumenti conclusio*, which is thus explained by him: It is such a reason which carries a Man's Mind from something already perceived to something which was not known: which he speaks according to the sense of the Stoicks, who called the proof of something uncertain by what was granted to be certain, a Demonstration: So that a Demonstration was no more than drawing a just Consequence; or the *τὸ συννημένον*, as they called it, the connex way of reasoning, which is, saith *Simplicius*, when two things are joyned together, as antecedent and consequent, so that by the position of the antecedent the consequent follows; and by taking away the consequent, the antecedent is taken away. So that every good reason which either proceeded from the nature of the thing, by those which they called demonstrative signs, or by concession of the Adversary, was called a Demonstration by them.

*Hippocrates* uses the word for any good proof: and *Plato* calls that a Demonstration which Wise Men would believe, but others would think incredible, which others have called Moral Certainty: Which lies in such an evidence as is sufficient to prove the thing; but the entertaining of that proof doth suppose a good temper and disposition of mind. For mathematical certainty doth force assent from all that do attend; and physical from those who are not resolved to be Scepticks; but in things of a Moral Nature, which relate to the consequence of Mens good or evil actions, or which depend upon the integrity of others in giving testimony, those things may be believed by honest and vertuous and wise Men; which bad Men, or those who have a disposition to cavil, will look on as incredible: Yet such Evidence as this *Plato* called a Demonstration; and in this sense *St. Paul* calls the evidence he gave among the *Corinthians* of the sincerity in delivering to them the testimony of God, the Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power. By which whatever be understood, we find by the universal acceptation of the word, it must be something by way of proof of another thing; and therefore cannot be understood of the actual conviction of Men's Minds by the power of his preaching. This many have called preaching in the Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power; *i. e.* preaching so as to convince them. I do not deny but the Spirit of God may and doth often convince Men's Minds by the power of preaching, *i. e.* by opening their eyes or softening their hearts, making them thereby fit to receive the evidence of Divine Truth. But the Apostle here speaks of

*Eud. vires  
de causis  
corrupt.  
art. 1. 3.  
p. 377.  
Metaphys  
1. 4. c. 4.  
Mag. Mon.  
1. 1. c. 1.  
Eudem 1.1.  
c. 6.  
Ad Nicom.  
1. 1. c. 1, 7.  
1. 2. c. 2.  
Meteor. 1.1.  
c. 7.  
Acad quos.  
1. 4. c. 8.  
Sext. Emp.  
Pyrrh. 1. 2.  
c. 10.  
C. Mathem.  
p. 246.  
Simplic. in  
Epiſt. c.  
58.*

*Hippocr. de  
arte. Plato  
in Phaedro.*

of something that might make sufficient amends to all reasonable Men for his not using the way of Eloquence or Reasoning; *i. e.* something that might be more satisfactory of the truth of what he delivered than either of those ways could be. But bare actual conviction is no ἀπόδειξις, no proof of the thing at all; and the manner of the conviction, though never so sudden or spiritual, can be no proof to others; therefore it is most reasonable to understand these words of such an evidence as might give satisfaction to the World of the truth of the Doctrine deliver'd by the Apostles. For if the Apostles words were understood of the conviction of Mens Consciences by the power of Preaching, his Argument could reach no farther, than to those who were actually convinced; but others might say, we feel nothing of this powerful Demonstration upon us, therefore you offer nothing to convince us; we desire to see some proof of what you say; you tell us that some are convinced by the force of your preaching; what then? have not thousands been so by those enticing words of Man's Wisdom which you disown? Then the Philosophers and Orators had the Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power as well as you. And why then do you so scornfully reject their way? Since therefore St. Paul speaks for the conviction of others, and of such a ground whereon their Faith was to stand, *v. 5.* it is most reasonable to understand these words of some external evidence which they gave of the Truth of what they delivered.

2. That evidence is described by a double character; it was of a Spiritual nature, and very powerful. And such a Demonstration was then seen among them in the miraculous Gifts and Works of the Holy Ghost, of which St. Paul discourseth at large in this Epistle. These did give *δεικτέραν ἀπόδειξιν*, saith Origen, a more Divine Demonstration than any among the Greeks. This Demonstration, saith St. Chrysostom, which was *διὰ τῶν ἐργῶν καὶ τῶν συμπεριων*, by signs and wonders, is much more evident than that which is merely by words. St. Paul, saith St. Jerom, would not dispute nor play the Orator among the Corinthians, but he made use of the Demonstration from Miracles to convince them. This was the great evidence God gave to the World to convince Mankind, that he sent these as his Messengers to deliver his Testimony to them. For the Apostles went forth, saith St. Mark, preaching every where; the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following; which shews how this Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power did accompany their preaching, and was intended by God himself for a confirmation of their Doctrine. And therefore God himself is said, to give testimony to their Doctrine by signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will. This then being such a Spiritual and Powerful Demonstration, and intended by God for that end, and at that time remarkable in the Church of Corinth, it were very strange if the Apostle did not mean it, by words which do so properly set forth both the nature and design of it.

3. Why this was not as liable to suspicion as the way of Eloquence and Logick, since those had been only corrupted and abused by Men, but the Power of Miracles had been pretended to by evil Spirits, which had long cheated and abused the World by the power of Magick, and by the gift of speaking in strange Languages by persons possessed with Devils, and the whole matter of Inspiration had been extremely dishonoured by the multitudes of Heathen Oracles? Why then did God reject the more reasonable ways of dealing with Men in the way of Elo-

Ch. 12, & 14.  
C. Cels. 1.1.  
In 1 Cor. 2.  
5. Hom. 6.  
Hier. in loc.  
Mark 16.  
20.  
Heb 2. 4.

quence and Demonstration, which were more natural and accommodate to the Capacities and Education of the most ingenious Minds, and make choice of a way which the World had been so much abused in by the Imposture of Evil Spirits? For who hath not heard of some persons, who in their strange fits have spoken in Tongues, which they never learnt? The *Pythian* Prophetess spake those things in Verse upon her Inspiration, which at other times she was not able to read. *Pomponatius* saith, he knew one himself who was a very mean person, that in her fits of Melancholy spake several Languages: To the same purpose are Instances recorded by *Petrus Aponensis*, *Psellus* and others. On what account then did God make choice of this way of the gift of Tongues, and Miracles, and Inspirations which were all so liable to be abused by the Devil? Two reasons may be given for it;

1. Because the Method God chose did prove it was not the Invention of Men, which would have been always suspected if meer human Arts had been used to promote it.

2. Because God gave abundant Evidence that it could never be the design of Evil Spirits, and therefore it was a Demonstration that came from God.

1. The Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power, or the wonderful Gifts of the Holy Ghost shewed, that the Gospel was beyond the meer Invention of Men. Whereas if the way of promoting this Religion had been common and ordinary with the usual methods of Persuasion, Men would have imputed all the Efficacy of it, only to the Wisdom of Men. This is the very reason given by the Apostle in the following words, *That your Faith should not stand in the Wisdom of Men, but in the Power of God.* For God knows very well the Vanity and Folly of Mankind, how apt they are to magnifie the Effects of their own Wit and Reason, if they be any ways serviceable to great Ends and Designs; and others would hardly have known how to have parted the shares, between the excellency of the Religion it self, and the Abilities of those that preached it. God did therefore make use of the most improbable means, as to human Wisdom, *that no flesh should glory before him*, and that Men should not suspect, it was only the Eloquence and Subtilty of the Preachers which made the Gospel find acceptance among Men. Afterwards, indeed, the Christian Religion was embraced by those who understood the depths of Philosophy, and professed to teach Men the arts of speaking, and was defended against its opposers with great subtilty of Reasoning, and advantage of Human Eloquence: And no Society of Men ever had persons of greater Abilities, nor more Divine Orators than the Christian Church. Nay, it hath had an Institution peculiar to its self, *viz.* an Order of Men set apart for this end, to perswade Mankind to believe and practice this holy Religion. Which was an admirable Institution for keeping up the Life and Spirit of Christianity, where the Office is discharged as it ought to be; and without it, as *Erasmus* observes, Religion grows very cold in the Hearts of Men. And it is observable, that upon the decay of the miraculous and extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, it pleased God then so to order it by his wise Providence, that Men of excellent Abilities and great Skill in Philosophy and Human Learning came in to the assistance of the Christian Cause. *Origen* speaks but of the Footsteps of this Spirit remaining in his time among the Christians; for then the School of *Alexandria* had sent forth Men of great Learning and rare Accomplishments to defend the Christian Faith; and care was taken for the Education of such

*Plato in E-  
pinom. &  
idem.*

*Pomponat.  
de incant.  
c. 10. p.  
141.*

5.

*Erasm.  
Præf. ad  
Ecclesiast.*

*Orig. c.  
Cels. l. 1.  
p. 5.*



such as might be able in the way of Reasoning and Eloquence both to maintain and promote the Cause of Christ. The School of *Alexandria* furnished the Church with *Pantanus*, *Clemens*, *Origen*, *Heraclas*, *Dionysius*, and others, all eminent for their Skill in all sorts of Learning; And out of the Schools of Rhetoricians, whose Arts *St. Paul* so much despised, came forth many useful persons to the Christian Cause, without laying aside the practice of their former Skill; such as *St. Cyprian*, *Arnobius*, *Lactantius*, and *St. Augustin*, who were all Teachers and Professors of Rhetorick. Thus when the first overflowing the Banks by extraordinary Gifts was declining, and things began to return to the ordinary Channel, those Gifts and Abilities were thought very useful and serviceable to the Church, which God would not make use of for the first preaching of it to the World. For by this time the World, if ever, might be convinced it was not begun by the art and cunning contrivance of Men, being at first preached by those who made use of no other human means but the greatest plainness and simplicity of Speech, that Men should not place their Faith in the Wisdom of Men, but in the Power of God. But those weak and injudicious persons, who from hence decry the use of Human Learning in any following Ages of the Church, might by as good reason say, the *Israelites* in *Canaan* were bound neither to plough nor sow, because their Forefathers were fed with Manna from Heaven in the Wilderness.

2. God gave sufficient Evidence, that these extraordinary Gifts could never be the Effects of any evil Spirits. And that I shall shew by comparing the Gift of Tongues and the Power of Miracles with the most plausible resemblances of these things by the Power of evil and seducing Spirits.

1. Thus much of the Gift of Tongues. I will not deny the truth of some Instances which have been brought concerning persons under the power of evil Spirits, that have expressed themselves in Languages which they never learnt. But what was this to the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles? Those distempered persons speak only in their raging fits, and as soon as those are over, they know not what they said themselves. As the Woman in *Pfellus* that spake the *Armenian Language* which she never learnt, when she came to her self, could give no account at all of what she spake. So the persons mentioned by others; as soon as they were out of their fits, could not speak any of those Languages or Verses they spake in them. Which shews, this was far enough from being any gift of Tongues; but the making use only of the Tongues of those persons to express what they did not understand. Some have been so vain, to attribute all this to the force and power of a melancholy Temper, which being heated and raised, carries the Imagination much farther than otherwise it could reach; like some Plants that give no pleasant smell till they be well rubbed and chafed, or like Jet that doth not attract till it be a little heated. But what doth all this signifie to the carrying the Imagination to things beyond its reach which had no impression at all upon it; as the words of an unknown Language have not? And if our Knowledge be only of those things which come in by the Senses (which is the beloved Axiom of these Men) how can they express that which they never learnt? Therefore, whenever this happens it must come from some foreign and external Cause, which is of a spiritual and intelligent Nature; and yet this Effect did not remain upon these Persons, but during their Enthusiastick Mad-

*Pfell de d-  
perat.  
Dim. p. 70.*

*Vid Ragusi,  
de Di-  
vinat. l. 2.  
p. 549.*

ness or Possession, which shews how infinitely short this falls of that Gift of Tongues which the Apostles had; considering these things, (1.) the Publickness of the Trial, (2.) the Usefulness of this Gift to them, (3.) the Manner of conferring it upon others.

1. The publickness of the Trial of it, when it first fell upon them on the Day of Pentecost. Never any Men made choice of a worse way, nor of a worse time, than the Apostles did in pretending to the Gift of Tongues at that time, if it had not been real. For nothing is easier confuted, or exposed than that is, when there are persons capable of putting it to the Trial, as there were abundance from all parts at that time in *Jerusalem, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, &c.* Jews from all Countries, whose Languages were well understood by them.

These were the most competent Judges in this Case; if this had happened at another Season, when persons were not present who understood the Tongues they spake, it would have been looked on as a Cheat and Imposture, but so many Men speaking in the Presence of the People of several Countries in their own Languages so as they very well understood them, did strangely amaze and confound them, when they found them to be illiterate and home-bred Jews. Some malicious persons would have imputed all this to the meer force of Wine which had intoxicated them, and made them speak they knew not what; but *St. Peter* effectually convinced them of the contrary by the Sobriety and Strength of his Reasoning; by which and other Apostles Discourses, together with this miraculous Gift of Tongues 3000 Persons were that Day converted to the Christian Faith. Where do we ever meet with any Proof like this given by others to convince Men, that they were Messengers sent from God? Here is nothing of Rage or violent Fits; but so many Men at the same time of the day, in the same publick place, before Persons capable of judging, speak in Languages, which they never learnt, and that not idle and insignificant Stuff, but the great things of God. When was it ever heard that evil Spirits inspired so many Men at once, in so publick a place, and exposed to such a Trial as these Men were? The *Pythian* Prophetess raged and foamed, and swelled, like a Vessel indeed full of new Wine, which was like to burst, if she found no vent, and then she uttered things which she knew not; and even these were spoken in the most retired places of the Temple, where the Priests might most conveniently help to deliver the Prophetess; if she could not easily bring forth what she had within her.

The Apostles fell into no extatick Furies, nor were made drunk with the hot Steams and sulphurous Vapours of the Earth, as it is probable the *Pythian* Prophetess was (for the first discovery of that famous Oracle was by the staggering of the Goats when they approached to that hole of the Mountain where the *Tripod* was ever after placed) but the Apostles behaved themselves with all the Sobriety and Prudence that Men could do, only speaking in new Tongues things which deserved Admiration, whatever Language they had been spoken in. After the time of Christ and the strange Prevalency of the Christian Religion to the Astonishment of Persecutors, and the wonder of the World, the great Zealots for Paganism endeavour'd to set up several Men in opposition to Christ and his Apostles, but especially they pitched upon two, *Pythagoras* and *Apollonius*. Thence they set themselves to write their Lives with greater Care than Fidelity; as *Porphyrie* and *Jamblichus* writ that

that of *Pythagoras*, and *Damis*, *Maximus Mæragenes*, and above all *Philostratus* writ that of *Apollonius*. Their Design was to shew that these were Men sent down from above for the Reformation of the World by Philosophy, and who did wonderful things to attest this to the World; and were in nothing behind that *Jesus of Nazareth* whom the Christians worshipped. And these were both extraordinary Men in their several ways: *Pythagoras* his Moral Institutions and Reformation of the Cities of *Magna Græcia* discover it of him; and *Eusebius* confesses as much of *Apollonius*, though he justly disdains the Comparison made by *Hierocles*, between him and our Blessed Saviour. But when they come to their miraculous Gifts to prove their Divine Commission, they are extremely hard put to it, having nothing to say worth mentioning in Comparison of the Miracles wrought by Christ and his Apostles: Only *Philostratus* pretends that *Appollonius* told *Damis* the *Affyrian* his Disciple, that he knew all Words and Languages although he never learnt any. But as *Eusebius* well observes, *Philostratus* himself contradicts this throughout his whole Book; for he gives a particular Account of his Studies, and the several Tutors which he had in his younger Days, as *Euthydemus*, *Euxenus* and others; what he learnt from the *Arabians*, what from the *Magi*, what from the *Brachmans*; and that he conversed with *Phraortes* King of *India* by an Interpreter, which plainly shew that *Philostratus* himself did not believe he had any such Gift of Tongues; for what need had he of an Interpreter who understood all Languages? Or what need had he to go up and down to learn every where, if he were sent from God to teach the World? And we have no Evidence for this, but his own bare word, which is evidently contradicted by the History which is written on purpose to magnifie him beyond Reason? He never offer'd to submit to such a Trial as the Apostles did of their Gift of Tongues on the Day of Pentecost in a great City, wherein were Persons present of all Nations that were capable Judges whether they had this Gift or not?

2. The usefulness of this Gift to the Apostles, for considering the Manner of their Education, and the Extent of their Commission to preach to all Nations; no Gift could be supposed more necessary for their purpose than this was, without which they had been as insignificant to the World, as *Xaverius* complains he was to the *Indians* for want of their Language, for when he preached they only stared upon him, and wondered what the Man meant; but could not tell one word he said. When God sends Men upon an Errand he furnishes them with Abilities fitted to their employment; as *Moses* with a Power of Miracles, *Aaron* with Eloquence, *Solomon* with Wisdom for Government, and the Apostles being designed the Universal Preachers of the World, with a Gift of Tongues to express themselves to the Understandings of all Persons, wherever they came. For we are not to imagine the fiery Tongues which rested on the Apostle's Heads on the Day of Pentecost, were like the lightning *Philostratus* mentions about *Apollonius* his Birth, which came down from Heaven upon Earth, but immediately returned up to Heaven again. For the great Usefulness of this Gift, was upon their going abroad to preach the Gospel, to Nations of very different Languages, especially in some parts of *Asia*, where *Mithridates* understood twenty two Languages, (whether wholly different or no is not material to our purpose, if those

*Philostat.*  
l. 1. c. 4.  
who

who spake them could not understand one another.) Those who were therefore to pass from City to City, and from Country to Country preaching the Gospel, could not have any Qualification more requisite to the Discharge of their Trust than this was. We find St. *Paul* regulating the Gift of Tongues in the Church of *Corinth*, so as it might be most for Edification; and therefore we may justly suppose God did give the Knowledge and Use of several Tongues, not meerly for a Sign on the Day of Pentecost, but as a Gift of constant Use to the Apostles in preaching the Gospel to Nations, whose Languages they understood not.

3. The manner of conferring these miraculous Gifts upon others shew that there was somewhat in them above all the Power of Imagination, or the Effects of evil Spirits. For where do we ever read that the *Pythian* Prophetess, or any possessed Persons enabled others to speak after the same manner which they did themselves? This was that which struck *Simon* the Sorcerer with Admiration; for among all the Magical Tricks he had learnt, he never saw or heard of any thing like to this that Men should receive such miraculous Gifts by the laying on of others hands. Thus Acts 8.18. upon the laying on of St. *Paul's* Hands, the Men at *Ephesus* who were Acts 19.6. baptized by him received the Holy Ghost, and spake with Tongues and prophesied. Whereby we see they had not only the Use of this Gift themselves, but the Power of conveying it to others; which neither *Apollonius*, nor any other of the greatest pretenders among the Heathens ever challenged to themselves.

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# SERMON XLVIII.

Preached on

## WHIT-SUNDAY.

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### PART II.

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I COR. II. 4.

*And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power.*

**W**Hat I last undertook was to prove that the Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power, or the wonderful Gifts of the Holy Ghost shewed, that the Gospel was beyond the meer Invention of Men; and that God gave abundant Evidence it could never be the Design of Evil Spirits, and therefore it was a Demonstration that came from God. As I promised to shew, by comparing the Gift of Tongues, and the Power of Miracles with the most plausible resemblances of these things by the Power of evil and seducing Spirits. The former of these, the Gift of Tongues, I have already considered, and now proceed to the other.

II. The Power of Miracles, or of doing extraordinary things, as well as of speaking after an extraordinary manner. This seems the hardest to give an account of, why God should make choice of this way of Miracles above all others, to convince the World of the Truth of the Christian Doctrine; upon these Considerations;

(1.) The great Delusions that had been in the World so long before under the pretence of Miracles.

(2.) The great Difficulty there is in putting a Difference between true and false Miracles.

(1.) The great Delusions that had been in the World so long before, under the pretence of some extraordinary Operations. The Sophistical Eloquence and Subtilty of Reasoning among the Greeks, had never done near so much Mischief to the World, as the pretence to a Divine Power and Inspiration in working had done: For by these the Devil's Kingdom

dom was the most advanced and established in the World. The gross Idolatry which was in all parts almost of the World ( a small Country, and that only at some times excepted ) could never have prevailed so much on the Minds of Men, had it not been for the pretence to Divine Inspiration in the Multitude of Heathen Oracles, and to miraculous Cures in the Temples, and the Wonders which were wrought by their Priests and Idols. Mankind hath somewhat in it more great than to submit it self, with all Acts of Devotion to Stocks and Stones, unless there were something of a Divine Presence supposed to be either in or about them. But when they were told that their Gods dwelt in them, and spake by them, and by their means wrought strange Cures on the Bodies of Men, when they were perswaded their Priests could do no mighty things by the bare speaking a few words; they then readily yielded themselves up Captives to the vilest Idolatry. It is observable to this purpose, that Idolatry, and Magick, did rise and fall in the World together. Had it not been for the Magicians of *Egypt*, the People would hardly have stooped so low as to worship Beasts and Plants, as well as other Idols, which made them ridiculous to other Nations: But their Priests were great Pretenders to the working of Miracles, as appeared by the famous Trial of Skill between *Moses* and them. These were the sacred Scribes, saith *Numenius*; the Priests of *Memphis*, saith *Artapanus* in *Eusebius*; and although they were sufficiently baffled by *Moses*, yet we do not read that either they or their Successours gave it over for all this. Nay, on the contrary, *Egypt* was the great Nursery both of Idolatry and Magick from whence they were transplanted into other parts of the World. From hence *Orpheus* convey'd both of them into *Greece*, and *Pliny* supposeth *Pythagoras*, *Democritus*, and other Philosophers to have learnt Magick chiefly in *Egypt*. Among the Eastern Idolaters the Magick of *Zoroaster* was famous, who seems to have been the great promoter of the Worship of Fire in those parts. In the time of *Xerxes*, *Osthanes* first writ concerning it, and dispersed the Seeds of this wonderful Art where-ever he came, and he accompanied *Xerxes* into *Greece*; upon which, saith *Pliny*, the *Greeks* ran mad after it. Never any thing prevailed more in the World, saith he, than this did, it was spread into *Italy*, and *Gaul*, nay, the very *Britains* were grown so skilful in it, that they might seem to have instructed the very *Persians* themselves. Since therefore the World had been abused by nothing more than a pretence of Miracles, it may seem to deserve our Admiration, that God should make choice of that above all ways to convince the World.

(2.) The great difficulty of putting a difference between true and false Miracles. It is to no purpose to say, that the one are wrought only by a Divine Power, and the other by a Created Power; for this can give no satisfaction unless the Beholders may discern them one from the other. For whether the Devil doth work any alteration in the matter, or only deceive the Sight, it is all one to those who are to judge, if they have no way to discover or prevent such a delusion of their Senses. Besides, we cannot fix the Bounds of Nature, unless we understood all the secret Causes of things, and the extent of the hidden Powers of all created Beings. Ignorance of Causes hath made many things thought to be Miracles which were not so; and till we come to an exact knowledge of the limits of created Powers, how can we certainly know what doth exceed them. Many Men have been esteemed

Magicians

Prep. E.  
van. 1.  
c. 8. l. 9.  
c. 27.

Ψ. Pausan.  
l. 30. c. 1.

Magicians for being more learned and skilful than their Neighbours; every thing that is very unusual is thought to be done by Spirits, who are supposed to have a Knowledge and Power so much above ours, that it seems a very hard thing to determine what extraordinary things are done by the secret powers of meer natural Causes, what by the interposition of created Spirits, and what only by the infinite power of God.

This is the great difficulty which is necessary to be cleared, or else the whole force is taken away from this Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power: And this difficulty may be reduced to these two Questions.

1. How we may know when any extraordinary thing doth exceed the power of material Causes?

2. If it doth exceed them, whether it be wrought by the power of evil or of good Spirits, when by meer created power, or when by infinite?

1. How we may know when any thing doth exceed the power of meer Nature, as that is opposed to any Spiritual Beings? For some have looked on all things of this kind either as the meer juggles and impostures of Men who lie in wait to deceive; or as the unusual Efforts of meerly natural Causes, which are not so circumscribed and limited, but at some times they may break forth after an extravagant manner. It is true, we cannot in all cases determine the Bounds of Nature, but doth it thence follow, we can do it in none? Are we not sure that the Fire must always burn that combustible Matter which comes within its reach? Can therefore the preservation of the three Children in the midst of the Fiery-furnace, be only imputed to an unusual effect of nature? How is it possible for a Man to rise out of the Grave after being buried four days, by all the powers of nature? What power of art or nature can cure a Man that was born blind? Is it natural for Men to speak all Languages, to heal all sorts of Diseases, with a word, with a touch in an instant, at a great distance? Although therefore we do not know the Bounds of Nature in all things, yet there are some things known with that assurance, that we may safely determine whatever is above the ordinary course of nature in them, cannot be the effect of meer nature, but of some intellectual Being, which hath a power above it.

2. We must therefore enquire farther, Whether such things be the effects of Magick or Divine Power; *i. e.* whether wrought by the power of evil Spirits, or an omnipotent Hand, for we are sure good Spirits will do nothing but in subserviency to God, and therefore what is not done by evil Spirits may be justly attributed to God himself. And the best way for our judging in this case is, by comparing together the effects of Magick and the power of Miracles, and we shall find so great a difference between them, that from thence we may be assured of the truth of this Demonstration as much as a Man may be of any other Demonstration, notwithstanding all the Arts of Sophistry.

For which end these two things are considerable.

1. That Christ and his Apostles did declare the greatest enmity to all evil Spirits, professing it their design to destroy the Devil's Kingdom and Power in the World. To this end they discovered those Spirits which then governed Mankind to be a sort of mischievous, malicious, damned Spirits, which many of the Heathen never suspected; and that their great design was to corrupt and abuse Mankind, by drawing them off

from the worship of the true God to the worship of Idols. But we find nothing like this among all the several sorts and fashions of Magick which were among them; the *Egyptian, Persian, Cretian* and *British* Magick, all agreed in the worship of the same kind; and differed only in some Names and Ceremonies; but they never charged each other with Idolatry as a fault, nor thought it any crime to worship Beings inferiour to God with Divine Worship. But the Christian Religion could not allow their manner of worship to be lawful, and made it necessary for Mankind to turn from all their Idols to serve the true and living God.

2. The Devil was not wanting in fit Instruments and Means to support his Kingdom; and God was pleased in his Infinite Wisdom to permit him to shew his Skill and Power; by which means there was a more eminent and conspicuous trial, on which side the greatest strength did lie. Thus in the case of *Moses*, the Magicians of *Egypt* went to the utmost of their Art, and held on with *Moses*, as long as possibly they could; which made the victory of *Moses* much more illustrious, than it would have been, if the *Egyptian* Magicians had never entred into a Competition with him, and their confession that it was the Finger of God by which *Moses* wrought his Miracles did mightily confirm the truth of it; being a Confession of Enemies, and forced from them through plain Evidence of a Divine Power accompanying *Moses*. *Simon Magus*, and *Menander* and their Crew, seem to have been set up by the Devil against the Apostles, as *Jannes* and *Jambres* against *Moses*; for they not only prevailed much in *Samaria*, but went up and down from place to place, pretending to do as great things as the Apostles did; and did such things as the Ecclesiastical Historians say, which did strangely amaze and astonish the People where-ever they came; and the Scripture confesseth as much of *Simon Magus*, so that the Devil's power was brought here into trial, with the Apostles. And after their times not only *Marcus* and his Companions pretended to the same power; but *Apollonius Tyanæus* went up and down pretending to do great Miracles where-ever he came, and the great defenders of Paganism afterwards, such as *Porphiry*, *Jamblicus*, &c. did own a Conversation with Spirits, and a power by their means to discover and do many things; which otherwise they could not have known or done.

Thus the matter is brought to a plain Contest of two opposite Powers, which is greater than the other, and which shews it self to be the Divine Power. To which purpose we may consider these two things.

1. The wisest among the opposers of Christianity could not tell, whether the Spirits they conversed with, were good or not. Never any Man opposed Christianity with more sharpness, and industry, and skill than *Porphiry* did; and yet in his Epistle to *Anebo* the *Egyptian* Priest he represents such monstrous Absurdities in their way of Conversation of Dæmons, that he professeth himself to be in very great perplexity about them, and at last concludes, if such things were true, that they were neither Gods nor good Dæmons, but Cheats and Impostors. And both he and *Plutarch* confess, there was a sort of malicious, cruel, false and wicked Dæmons which did sometimes deliver their Oracles, and appear to those who raised Spirits, and put Men upon doing many bad Actions to themselves and others. What assurance then could these give, that the Spirits they worshipped, and acted by the power of, were not such evil Spirits? Since they had no way to keep them

*Euseb. Præp. Evang. l. 5. c. 10.*

*c. 4, 5, &c.*



them from them, or to distinguish the good and evil from each other. And although *Jamblichus* thought to clear the matter by distinguishing the Theurgick Rites from the ordinary Magick; yet he cannot deny, that after all their preparations and purifications of themselves, evil Demons may appear instead of good ones; it being common for the bad to appear under the notion of good. Upon which consideration, one in these latter Ages, who had spent much time in collecting all the Theurgick Rites in order to a Conversation with Angels and working Miracles; upon mature consideration recanted all he had written, and dissuades others from meddling in such deceitful and damnable Arts.

*Agrippa de  
vanit. sci-  
ent. c. 46,  
48.*

2. That the pretended Miracles of the opposers of Christianity did differ from the Miracles wrought by the Apostles in several weighty circumstances.

1. In the design and tendency of them. Most of the wonderful things whereof the Enemies of Christianity did boast were wrought, either,

(1.) To raise astonishment and admiration in the Beholders. For what other end could there be of *Simon Magus's* flying in the Air at *Rome*, which the Ancients mention, as the thing wherein he designed to shew his miraculous power? What effect could there be of this, but to make the people gaze and wonder, and extol him; if he had not fallen to his own ruine, as they say he did? His other Miracles recorded are for the same end, as making Statues to walk, and the vessels of a House to move, and transforming himself into several shapes, making strange apparitions, and disappearing himself, supposing all these things to have been true of him; what benefit or advantage came to Mankind by them? As all the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles were very useful and beneficial to the World; what could be more obliging to Mankind than healing all manner of Diseases, and those the most desperate and incurable. This was the practice of our Saviour, for he went up and down doing good. He aimed not at his own Honour and Glory, but at the Honour of him that sent him. He did not call Multitudes together to behold the strange things which he did, nor frequent the publick Spectacles and greatest concourse of the People, he did not insinuate himself into the Acquaintance of Princes and great Men to be admired by them, as *Simon Magus* and *Apollonius* did; for *Apollonius* wandred up and down the World, as *Simon Magus* did, to be thought some great Man, the course of his Actions discovered a vain Mind, eager of applause where-ever he came, and especially in the Courts of Princes. Can any thing be more vain than the Conferences he had with the *Brachmans*, or the miraculous dancing of the Stools among them; or his pretending to understand the Language of Birds; or the Questions he put to *Achilles's* Ghost? As, whether *Polyxena* were slain at *Achilles's* Tomb, whether *Helena* were carried to *Troy* or no? Wonderful Questions indeed to be asked by so grave a Philosopher, whom the Pagans set up in competition with Christ! His being crucified between two Thieves was less dishonour to him, than to be compared with two such persons as *Simon Magus* and *Apollonius*. Yet the Enemies of Christianity could not find out any person they thought so fit to be compared with Christ, for his Wisdom and Miracles, as this *Apollonius*, whose Miracles were as short of Christ's as his Wisdom was; and it was a strange Instance of Malice and want of Judgment to compare so insolent and vain a pretender to Divinity, so idle a Vagabond, so impudent an Impostor, with the Eternal Son of God, whose Temper and Conver-

*Arnob. l. 2.*

*Theod. l. 1.*

*c. 1.*

*Isid. Phyl.*

*l. 1. Ep. 13.*

*Anastaf.*

*qu. 23.*

fation, and Miracles and Doctrine were as far above his, as the light of the Sun is above the shining of rotten Wood; or the most Sacred Truths above the Fables of the Poets.

(2.) To gratify the Curiosity of Mankind. The great itch of knowing things above our reach was that which ruined our first Parents, and hath given the greatest advantage to the Devil against us ever since. For when Men were extremely desirous of knowing things hidden, or future, he soon found out many Inventions either to satisfy or deceive them. From hence came the Oracles, and the many methods of Divination, and the consulting with Spirits, which were all adapted to that insatiable thirst Men had of knowing, what God thought fit to conceal from them. It was this which inspired the Oaks of *Dodona*, and made the Brass Kettles give Answers to those who came to consult the Oracle: It was this, which made the Nods of *Jupiter Hammon* be understood by Men who did take the artificial motions of an Image for an Answer of the Gods: It was this, which filled the *Pythian* Prophetess with an Enthusiastick Rage, and made her in her Epileptick Fits foam out Oracles; and raised so rich a Temple at the Foot of *Parnassus*, which at last was consumed with Lightning from Heaven, and the golden Statue of *Apollo* melted, and the sacred Cavern filled up with the Ruins of the Temple: It was this, which made the Image at *Antioch* give Answers by its looks, and made the People depend on its Smiles, or its Frowns: It was this, which made the *Delian* Lottery so famous, and the Cave of *Trophonius* so dreadful to those which entred into it: It was this, which made Men whisper in the Ears of the Image of *Mercury*, and as soon as they had done stop their own Ears and run presently home, and the first words they heard as soon as they were out of their Doors, they took for an Oracle. It was this, which made the *Egyptian Apis* give Answers by the manner of his Eating; and filled Men with Panick Fears, if the Beast were sullen and despised his Provender. It were endless to repeat the several places and ways whereby the Devil did befool Mankind under the pretence of gratifying their Curiosity in those deceitful and lying Oracles: And although by many Instances they could not but discover the Tricks and Cheats, which the Devils and the Priests did put on them, yet the Work went on still as long as there were Men willing to be abused, till such time as those Arts were more openly discovered by the coming of Christ, and the preaching the Gospel to the World. For after that time, their Reputation was strangely sunk, and their Philosophers were puzzled at the Reason of it; although they were still consulted by some few Persons, till *Julian* was fatally deceived by the Oracle, and then their Mouths were stopt for ever. It was this unreasonable Curiosity which made Men not contented with the knowledge of the living and the Books of the dead, unless they did by their superstitious Rites and Ceremonies raise up their Spirits, or at least others in their stead: To this end they covered their Altars with Blacks or Cypress, they kindled their Fire with Wood taken out of Sepulchres, they sprinkled the Blood of their Sacrifices on the Earth, and mixed their Wine, and Milk, and Honey, and carried the Bowels of the Beasts thrice about the Altar, and then burnt them, with which, and many other Customs of a like nature, they hoped to converse with the dead, and to be informed by them of what they most desired to know.

It was this, which made them expect Answers by a shrill Voice out of the Water, or by Shadows within them, or by Representations in Chrystal Glasses, or by enchanted Rings, (such as *Apollonius* brought from the *Brachmans*) or by the Nails of a Child covered over with Soot and Oyl and held to the Sun. It was this, which put Men upon all the ways of Divination by the Ax and the Sive, by the Head of an Ass and a Cock picking up the Grains of Corn; by Images made by a certain position of the Stars, by the Entrails of Beasts, and the flying of Birds; by Lotts, and by Dreams, and what not? So strangely did this Curiosity bewitch and infatuate Mankind, and laid them open to all the Impostures and Delusions of evil Spirits, which could not but despise the Folly of Mankind, at the same time when they did the most humour and gratify this vain and impetuous desire of knowing things beyond their reach. From hence we see have risen most of those which the Heathens accounted their Divinest Works; but the Christian Religion utterly renounceth all these things as Superstitious and Impious; it represseth the vain Curiosity of Men, by forbidding Solitude about future Events, and commanding a Resignation of our selves to the wise disposal of Divine Providence; and so cuts off all these ways of Divination by the Root: It teaches Men to be wise with Sobriety, to keep their Desires of Knowledge within due bounds, not to torment themselves with the Fears of future Evils, not to disquiet their Minds with what is to come, because sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

(3.) To encourage Idolatry. To this end it was that their Oracles were most in the Temples, and they who came to consult them, must first come and offer their Sacrifices to the Gods that were worshipped there. The *Pythian* Prophetess never opened her Mouth till they saw the Beast stand trembling before the Altar. Those that descended into the Cave of *Trophonius*, were first to be tried by many Sacrifices, whether they were fit to enter it or not, and they were to pray before an Image of *Dædalus's* making, which none else were allowed to see, and then after other preparation they were let into that dreadful place, where they saw and heard strange things, which they discovered to the Priests when they came forth. By such Arts as these the Devil drew Men on to Idolatry; for these things made them very superstitious and fearful, very free and liberal in their Sacrifices and Oblations, very nice and punctual in observing all their Idolatrous Rites: For they were told, if they omitted any, it was as much as their Lives were worth, and instead of good and kind Dæmons, they would meet with such as were cruel, and malicious, and mischievous to Mankind. If any were troubled with incurable Diseases, they were told there was no remedy but sleeping in the Temple of *Æsculapius*, or *Ifis*: If they had not Devotion enough to their Idols, then they heard how one Image had spoken, and another moved, and a third did sweat, and a fourth did bow its Body, or testify'd its approbation or dislike of the persons who worshipped. These things they used as Arguments to perswade the duller sort, who would not be moved by bare Representation, and thought that too slender a pretence for so much Devotion, that the Gods did really dwell in their Images, and were incorporated there, after the use of certain Rites for that purpose; which therefore could easily foretel Events and work miraculous Cures, all which did manifestly tend to the promoting of Idolatry. And therefore among all

Miracles

*Aug. de Civ. Dei. l. 8. c. 23. Pfell de Dæmon. P. 85.*

Miracles wrought in the Christian Church in the first and purest Ages of it, we meet not with one of this kind; for the Christians then were so afraid of Idolatry coming again into the World, that many of them would not allow so much as the common use of Images, and the Apostles gave very strict charge to their Disciples to flee from Idolatry, and to keep themselves from Idols. So that this sort of miraculous Works was then thought peculiar to Paganism; but after the great degeneracy of the Christian Church, and lapsing into Idolatry under other Names and Pretences, then nothing was so much talked of as this sort of Miracles. So many persons cured at such and such an Image; such a Crucifix spake, and moved, and nodded, and smiled; and all these things revived for the same purpose, *viz.* to encourage Idolatry, though never so repugnant to the Nature and Design of Christianity.

(4.) To take Men off from the Necessity of a holy-Life. All the Concernment the Devil had as to his Oracles and Divinations, and Magical Operations, was only for some external Rites and particular Ceremonies which were to be punctually observed; but as to the inward Passions of the Mind, or giving way to Immoralities, he never troubled them about those Matters, and would not have others be concerned about them. But after that the Christian Religion did lay such severe Laws upon Mankind about these Matters, the Love of God and our Neighbour and the Practice of Justice, Temperance and Chastity were made so necessary parts of our Religion, the World began to be awakened about these things, and to think that God looked more after them, than they imagined. For before they generally supposed that their Religion lay in Sacrifices and Prayers, and Rites and Ceremonies, but that the Actions of Life belonged more to the Laws of Men, than to God's. But when Christ and his Apostles told Men, that God looked more after the Hearts and Lives of Men, than any meer external Acts of Worship, that the great End of Christ's coming was to take away Sin, and to destroy the Works of the Devil; and to redeem a peculiar People zealous of good Works, and this Doctrine confirmed by Miracles, then the main hold of the Devil was like to be demolished; and therefore he set up *Simon Magus* with as loose a Doctrine as the Heart of Man could wish, making all Actions indifferent, and of no influence on Men's Eternal Happiness or Misery; and yet pretended to Divine Mysteries, and to confirm this Doctrine as the Apostles did theirs by miraculous Works. Let now any reasonable Person judge, without farther Examination, which sort of Miracles were agreeable to the Divine Nature; those which were wrought for Ostentation, to gratifie Men's vain Curiosity, to encourage Idolatry and Licentiousness; or those which were wrought for the good of Mankind, and to confirm the most necessary and useful Doctrine of Salvation; whose great End was to draw Men off from all Idolatry and Vice to serve the true and living God?

2. In the Variety, Openness, Usefulness, and Frequency of them. The greatest Magical Powers were limited and confined; and the Spirits which ruled in the Children of Disobedience were sensible of their own Fetters and Chains; and therefore they were great promoters of the Doctrine of fatal Necessity, that if any thing were out of their Power, Fate might bear the blame, and not they. Thus *Eusebius* observes that *Apollonius Tyanaeus* was a vehement Asserter of the fatal Necessity of all things, although thereby he destroyed the Difference of Virtue and Vice,

Vice, and took away all Rewards and Punishments: They had no other Refuge but this to defend themselves, when the Temple of *Apollo* was burnt, that the Fates would have it so, and *Jove* himself gives way to the Necessity of Fate; as *Porphyrj* confesseth: And whenever things fell out otherwise than was foretold, still, saith *Eusebius*, the Devil deceived them with this pretence, that it could not be helped, for the Fates had otherwise determin'd. This was the subtlest way for the Devil to conceal his own Ignorance and Weakness; and on this Account if they failed in any of their pretended Miracles, if they could do only some few things and of a certain kind, they had Fate still at hand to excuse them. But we find no such Confinement in the Apostolical Gifts and Miracles, which were wrought effectually and dispersed promiscuously, as might be most serviceable to the ends of them. It is true *St. Paul* saith these extraordinary Gifts were variously distributed among the Members of the Church, to one the Gift of Wisdom, to another of Knowledge, to one the Gift of curing Diseases, to another speaking with Tongues, to another Interpretation of Tongues, to another Prophecy, &c.

*Euseb. prep. Evang. l. 6. c. 3. c. 6.*

*1 Cor. 12. 8, 9, 10.*

But here we see in the same Church a mighty Variety of these extraordinary Gifts; such as was not to be met with in any other Society of Men whatsoever. The Schools of *Hippocrates* and *Galen* never sent out so many Men with such a Faculty of healing Diseases so easily, so certainly, so frequently, so publickly, so universally, as the Apostles and their Disciples did. They felt no Pulses, examined no Symptoms, prescribed no tedious Course of Physick to remove the Causes, alter the Temper of the Blood, and prepare the Body for a Cure; which is a Method the best and most skilful Physicians are forced to observe; and after all their utmost Care and Diligence they often see the Disease grow too strong both for Nature and Art, and the poor Patient breath his last, being unable to rescue him from the Jaws of Death. But those who had this admirable Gift of Healing, cured all sorts of Diseases with a Word, or a Touch, or a Handkerchief, or their Shadow; which shewed their Power was far above Nature, which the most Acute, the most Chronical, the most Malignant Diseases were not able to withstand.

*Æsculapius* himself neither as a Physician, nor as a God ever wrought so many, so great, so sudden Cures as Christ and his Apostles did; here *Simon Magus* and *Apollonius* were forced to give out; all the Charms and Tricks of the most cunning Magicians could never come near that, which Christ and his Apostles did publickly, and in the sight of Enemies, as well as Friends; they did not run into Corners, nor make use of dark Rooms, and the most secret Places to do their Miracles in: What they did was open to the View of all, they desired their most prying Enemies to be present to observe all their Actions, and to watch those who were cured, that they might be fully satisfied both of the Certainty of the Disease and the Cure. Not one or two healed by them, as was pretended of *Vespasian*; in which Case Men may suspect Contrivance and Forgery, or meer Chance, or some hidden Causes; But to see Multitudes of all Ages, and Conditions, and Tempers, and Diseases cured so openly, so suddenly, so effectually, must needs discover to those who are not wilfully blind, a Power far above either Art or Nature. And for what evil Spirits can do in this kind, if it were within their Power, we never find they had so much good Will to Mankind to do such things,

*Demon.*  
l. 2. c. 1.

things, they love to vex and torment and destroy Mankind, as much as in them lies, and it is for this purpose chiefly their Assistance is desired by wicked and malicious Creatures; and for such ends they offer their help and advice, and give directions to means to compass them, (if the Experience of most of the known Ages and Nations of the World may be credited) and although sometimes they may pretend to do good Offices to Mankind, in that which they call White Magick, yet it is only with a Design to entrap and ensnare the Souls of Men, for under this pretence Thousands have been drawn to their own Destruction, who seemed to abhor any Communication with evil Spirits, as *Bodin* observes. Who tells us of a great Prince that carried an Image of the Planet *Jupiter* about his Neck made according to the Theurgick Rites, in hopes to have greater Success in his Affairs by it, who yet came to a miserable end; after which manner the Devil commonly cheats those who trust in lying Vanities, and therefore forsake their own Mercies. But he that came to be the Saviour of Mankind expressed all the Love and Compassion possible towards the Infirmities of human Nature; he did not break the bruised Reed nor quench the smoking Flax; he did not insult over the Miseries or Calamities of Mankind, but gave Ease and Relief and Comfort to those who were oppressed either in Soul or Body. And this excellent Pattern his holy Apostles followed, they instructed the Ignorant, exhorted the Negligent, reprov'd the Vicious, satisfied the Doubtful, raised up the Weak, and encouraged the Strong; they became all things to all Men, not for their own Advantage but for others. And that they might be every ways useful, God furnished them with this miraculous Gift of healing Diseases, that if Men did either love their Souls or their Bodies, they ought to love those who were so useful to both. But besides the great Variety, and Usefulness of these extraordinary Gifts, the Frequency of the Miracles wrought by the Apostles deserves our Consideration. How often do the Roman Writers tell of one *Claudia* that drew the Ship with her Girdle that was fastned, so that many Men could not move it; of one *Tuccia* that held Water in a Sieve; of one *Accius Nevius* that cut the Whetstone with his Raizer: But what are these rare things, supposing them true, to the innumerable Multitudes of very useful Miracles which were done by Christ and his Apostles? What was the Rivers saluting *Pythagoras*, or the Elm speaking to *Apollonius*, (granting them to be no Fictions) to the Testimony which God gave from Heaven to his Son thrice by an audible Voice; and the Witness he bare to his Apostles by Signs and Wonders, and divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his own Will? Upon which Consideration it will appear, that the Devil hath been so far from being able to match these miraculous Operations, that in all the Histories extant of any Nation we never meet with any thing like them in all Circumstances, *viz.* that one Person should first appear doing abundance of Miracles in all Places, raising the Dead, and rising himself out of the Grave, after which twelve that were his chief Disciples spake with Tongues they never learnt, healed Diseases they understood not, which they not only did frequently themselves, but communicated these Gifts to many others by laying on of their Hands; which not only continued for a Month or a Year or two, but the Remainder of them were to be seen in the Christian Church after the first Century was expired from the first Descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost. Go now and search  
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the Records of former times, and see if any Age, or Nation, or Religion could produce such a Démonstration for it self as this was.

What did ever *Zoroaster* among the *Persians*, *Orpheus* among the *Greeks*, *Numa* among the *Romans*, *Mahomet* among the *Arabians*, *Xaca* among the *Indians* produce comparable to this Divine Demonstration? The pretences of some of them to Miracles was justly suspected to be from Conversation with evil Spirits by the Heathens themselves, and of others was very vain; ridiculous *Mahomet* of whom we know the most, is very hard put to it in this business of Miracles; for, (1.) he owns that Miracles are the best Confirmation of the Truth of Apostleship, or immediate Mission from God, and the best security against Impostors: (2.) That Christ and his Apostles did work great and real Miracles, raising the Dead, curing the Lame and the Blind, cleansing the Lepers; and this for a Confirmation of their Divine Mission. (3.) That he was called upon to shew his being an Apostle by Miracles; and he confesses many would not believe him because he did not raise the Dead, nor cure Diseases. What now could this subtle Impostor say for himself? (1.) He pleaded, that Faith did not depend on Miracles, but on the Grace of God; for, saith he, if we had sent Angels to them, and some had come from the Dead, they would not have believed unless God had pleased. (2.) That Miracles would take off from the Worth and Excellency of believing. Well, saith he, for those that will not believe without Miracles, I tell you, when God shall send Signs among you, that Man's Faith shall not save him unless he believes before he sees the Signs. But when he saw that all his Shifts and Evasions would not serve without some shew of Miracles, at last he pretends to them, but so weakly and foolishly, that he fell much short of *Apollonius* and *Simon Magus*: Witness his Miracle of splitting the Moon into two pieces and a Mountain appearing in the Middle; so there do many, by the help of Telescopes without a Miracle: Witness the Miracle of the Angel *Gabriel* taking out a drop of black Blood from his Heart to prevent his being tempted of the Devil: Witness the Salutation of him by the Trees and the Stones; Parock. Spe. cim. p. 187. the weeping of a Palm at his Flight from *Mecca*, the signing of a Beam, and such ridiculous Fopperies, which yet had no other Testimony for the truth of them, besides his bare word. And therefore it was great weakness and folly in him so much as to pretend to Miracles; which the wisest of his Followers are very sensible of, and therefore say the *Alcoran* is instead of all Miracles, of which they glory that it is penn'd with that admirable Eloquence, that all the Men on Earth, and the Devils in Hell, are not able to match one Chapter of it. So that they cast off all the rational evidence of Miracles as inconsistent with the excellency of believing, and resolve their Faith wholly into the self-evidencing power of the *Alcoran*. But although we have infinitely more reason to magnifie the Sacred Oracles of Scriptures, for the purity of their Doctrine, and the admirable simplicity joyn'd with the majesty of their Style; yet Christ and his Apostles offered the fairest and most convincing Evidence to the World of their Divine Commissions that ever was shewed or pretended to by Men.

I shall only add one Circumstance more, wherein the Miracles wrought to confirm the Christian Religion exceed all others, and that is,

3. In the Satisfaction they have given to the most inquisitive part of Mankind, *i. e.* either to convince them of the truth of the Doctrine confirmed by them, or at least to bring them to this Acknowledgment, that

if the matters of fact were true, they are a sufficient proof of a Divine Power. If Christ did rise from the Dead himself, and send abroad his Apostles so qualify'd, as is expressed in the *New Testament*, it was the fairest proof could be given, that they were sent from God. And this is as great an advantage as any proof from Miracles can ever have, *viz.* that those things were certainly above the Power of Nature, the raising the Dead, the healing Diseases with a word speaking, the Gift of Tongues, &c. and that they offered the fairest trial of the truth and certainty of them by appearing and acting so publickly in all Cities and places where-ever they came. From hence it came to pass, that although *Simon Magus* had many great Advantages above the Apostles, as to the Entertainment of his Doctrine in the World, by the Countenance he gave to a licentious way of living, and by avoiding Persecutions, making it lawful to observe any Rites of Religious Worship (which were two very taking Principles with the generality of Mankind who love Pleasure and Safety above all things) yet the Christian Religion, notwithstanding the strictness of its Precepts as to both those, strangely prevailed and gained esteem in the World, when *Simon Magus* sunk and declined so much, that *Origen* saith, in his time there were scarce thirty persons left in the whole World, that had any kind of esteem for him, which was the thing he aimed at in all his Undertakings; when at the same time the Christian Religion was spread over most of the known Countries and Cities in the World; and gained ground continually notwithstanding all the disadvantages it met with from the falseness of pretended Brethren, and the fury of enraged Persecutors. And the more Just and Honest, the more Pious and Charitable, the more Searching and Inquisitive any persons were, the sooner they embraced and entertained the Christian Religion; for they found, if Men did but lay aside Prejudices and examine things with that Care and Sincerity they ought to do, there was enough in the Christian Religion to convince and satisfy the most impartial Mind that it came from God. Thus mightily did Christianity prevail over the Frauds of Men and Impostures of the Devil; and as *Simon Magus* his Followers sunk to thirty in *Origen's* time, we do not read that *Apollonius* was ever able to gather so many Disciples: For he seems to have been a Man of very small Reputation in the World, till some persons cried him up out of spite and malice to Christianity, after *Philostratus* had published his Romance concerning him; wherein no manner of sufficient proof is offered, concerning the most material things which are related of him, but the bare single Testimony of *Damis* the *Assyrian*, whom *Philostratus* himself did so little believe, that he saith, he left out a great deal which the other had written; and some not unjustly think, hath made a great deal more of his own Head. And where he speaks about the greatest Miracle *Apollonius* ever pretended to, *viz.* the raising a Maid from the Dead, he speaks so doubtfully and uncertainly about it, whether she were really dead or no, that one may easily discern he did not believe it to be any Miracle at all. But supposing there had been any greater pretence to Miracles among the Enemies of Christianity, where were there any such proofs offered of the truth of them, as were by the Christians. Did *Damis*, or *Maximus*, or *Philostratus* ever venture the loss of one Hair of their Heads to prove the truth of any thing they reported of *Apollonius*? Did *Mahomet's* Uncle undergo any Torments rather than deny the Miracle of the cleaving of the Moon? No, himself confesseth that

*Orig. C.*  
*Cels. p. 44.*  
1. 1.

L. 4. c. 16.



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that he thought it an Imposture. How do *Porphyry* or *Jamblichus* prove the Miracles of *Pythagoras*? by nothing; but by a very slender Fame and a kind of silent Tradition. But this was the invincible proof that Christianity offered of the truth of these things; that the Apostles themselves cheerfully sacrificed their lives to attest them, and many thousands of persons followed their Examples; which surely is the highest proof can be given of a matter of fact, such as the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles were, which was that Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power our Apostle thought justly would give more Satisfaction to Mankind, than if he had made use of the most enticing Eloquence, or the most demonstrative Syllogisms.

*And therefore, O thou most wise and powerful God, who didst hide the Methods of thy infinite Wisdom for the Salvation of Mankind from the Wise and Prudent of this World; and didst make choice of things accounted weak and foolish among Men, to confound the strong. O thou that despisest the Subtilties of Human Wisdom, and knowest the Thoughts of Men that they are vain, and therefore didst make choice of such Methods to confirm our Faith, that it might not stand in the Wisdom of Men but in the Power of God: Make us so sensible of our Weakness and Folly, that we may not lean on our own Understandings, nor be led aside by any enticing words of Man's Wisdom into the Paths of Error or Wickedness; but guide thou our Understandings in the knowledge of thy Truth, confirm our Faith in thy holy Word, inflame our Souls with a greater love to it, and give us that good and powerful Spirit of thine, which may direct our Minds, incline our Wills, and govern our Passions, according to thy Gospel; that being under the Conduct of thy Wisdom and Power in this Life, we may after this Life be admitted to Everlasting Glory, through thy Eternal Son, Jesus Christ, to whom with thee and thy Holy Spirit, be given all Honour and Praise, now and for ever. Amen.*

# SERMON XLIX.

Preached at

## WHITE-HALL.

I SAMUEL II. 30.

*For them that honour me I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.*

**T**Hese Words were spoken by a Prophet of the Lord to Eli, at that time, the High-Priest and Judge over Israel, upon Occasion of the Wickedness of his Sons, and the Dishonour brought upon Religion thereby; which was so great that it is said, *they made the people abhor the Offering of the Lord.* But that we may the better comprehend their Scope and Design, there are some remarkable particulars to be considered; with respect to the Circumstances that attend them.

(1.) That their Sins were of a high and scandalous Nature, being an open Affront both to the Ceremonial and Moral Law. *The Offering of the Lord* was that which himself had appointed in the Law of Moses; wherein it was expressly required, that the *Fat of the Sacrifices of Peace-Offerings* must be burnt upon the Altar, and after that, the Joints were to be divided, and the Priest was to have his share, and the People that offer'd them the rest. But these Sons of Eli thought themselves too great to be tied up to such a strict observance of the Niceties of the Law; and therefore they sent their Servants to demand what they pleased, without any Regard to that Order which the Laws appointed. It is possible, they might think (although such lewd and profane Persons are not much given to thinking) that the matter was not great, how, or in what manner, they took the share which belong'd to them; but God, who best knew what was pleasing to himself, saith, *The sin of the young men was very great before the Lord.* For God will and ought to be served in his own way, and they, who thought to be Wiser than his Laws, smarted for their Folly. Thus Nadab and Abihu (two brisk young Men) had a mind to try the Experiment of offering *strange fire before the Lord* (not taking it from the Altar as God had appointed.) And what came of this Presumptuous violation of God's Law? They were immediately consumed by a *strange fire* themselves; for, it is said, *A fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord; i. e.* they were struck dead with Lightning upon the place, and their dead Bodies were carried forth *from before the sanctuary out of the Camp;* that

that all the People might observe the Truth of what *Moses* said to *Aaron* on this Occasion: *This is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified* V. 3: *in them that come nigh me, and before all the People I will be glorified.* It is true, God did not punish *Hophni* and *Phinehas* in the same manner, who added great Lewdness and Immorality to their other faults; but He severely threatens the whole House of *Eli* for their Sins; and as a sign of V. 22. the rest, he declares, that these profligate Wretches should both be taken off the same Day; Which was accordingly accomplished with V. 34. dreadful Circumstances; For, *the Ark of God was taken* at the same Ch. 4. v. 11. time.

(2.) That the House of *Eli* was advanced to that Dignity which it then enjoy'd by an Extraordinary Method of Providence: For, when *Nadab* and *Abihu* the Sons of *Aaron* were destroy'd, there remained Lev. 10 6. *Eleazar* and *Ithamar*, (for the other died Childless,) from them de- 1 Chr. 24. scended two Branches of *Aaron's* Family. *Eleazar* was of the Elder 2. Num. 3. 4. House; but *Eli*, who descended from *Ithamar*, was in possession of the High Priesthood by God's Approbation. And when *Abiathar* in *Solo-* 1 Chr. 14. *mon's* time was put bye the High Priesthood, it is said, *that he descended* from *Ithamar*, and was of the House of *Eli*; and he was *therefore thrust* 2. 5. 1 Kings. out that *God might fulfil his Word, which he spake concerning the House of* 24. 27. *Eli* in *Shiloh*. By which we find, that God had raised up the House of *Eli* after an extraordinary manner; and no doubt, according to the wise methods of Divine Providence for an extraordinary end; and we find no ill Character fixed upon *Eli* himself, although *he had judged* 1 Sam. 4. *Israel forty years*; but there were those about him, and very near him, 18. who were loose, profane and dissolute Persons, and although those who are most concerned, do commonly hear the last of the Miscarriages of those related to them; yet the Cry was so great that it came to his Ears, and he took notice of it, and reprov'd them for it; *And he* Ch. 2. v. 22, said to them, *why do ye such things? &c.* The good old Man seems to 23, 24, 25. be heartily concerned and troubled for his Sons Follies; but this did not answer God's End; for the Reason he gives of the heavy Judgments denounced against his Family, was, *because his Sons made them-* Ch. 3 v 13. *selves vile, and he restrained them not.* God expects something more than meer Words, or bare Reproofs, where his Honour, and that of Religion, are so much concerned. But when Profaneness, Looseness and Irreligion, crept in among them, and grew too hard for the Government, God threatens to do such a thing in *Israel*, at which both the ears Ch 3. v. 11. of every one that heareth it shall tingle. I need go no farther.

(3.) That although God was justly provoked by the Sins of the House of *Eli*; yet there was a concurrence of the Peoples Sins in bringing down such severe and astonishing Judgments. There was no great loss in *Hophni* and *Phinehas*, unless they had been better; but it was a terrible Judgment to have *the Ark of God* taken, and carried Captive; and thereby their whole Religion exposed to scorn and contempt among their Neighbours, who hated them for the sake of their Religion. For when the Idolatrous Nations about them had corrupted themselves and the Worship of God, he was pleased, by the Ministry of *Moses*, to set up a Form of Worship among the People of *Israel* according to his own Will. This gave great Dissatisfaction to all their Neighbours, and increased their Spight and Malice against them; which they were ready to shew on all Occasions; but never more than when *the Ark of God* was taken Captive and carried about in Triumph among them: For this

was the *Symbol* of God's particular *Presence* among the People of *Israel*. The *Tabernacle*, with all its rich and admirable *Furniture*, was as his *Court*; but the *Holy of Holies*, as his *Chamber of Presence*; and there the *Ark* was the place where God gave his *Answers* to his People on great and *Solemn Occasions*. And what could be more grievous and dishonourable to them, than to have this *Ark of God* carried away by their *Enemies*? For, then the *Name* of the whole Nation might have been *Ichabod*, for the *glory was departed from Israel*. But was all this merely for the *Sins of Hophni and Phinehas*? No; the *Punishment* on that account related to the *House of Ely*; but this was a *Judgment* on the whole Nation: And God himself gives a *sad Account* of it, but it was such, as reached to the *Nature and Extent* of the *Judgment*. Go ye  
 Ch. 4v. 22. now, faith God in the Prophet *Jeremiab*, unto my place which was in *Shiloh*, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my People *Israel*. So that here was a *Complication* of the *Sins* of all sorts to bring down so heavy a *Judgment* upon them.

And thus I have endeavour'd to clear the way towards the right apprehending the full scope and design of these Words, *Them that honour me I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed*. Wherein are two things to be spoken to;

I. The *Nature* of that *Honour* which is due to God.

II. The *Rules and Measures* whereby God bestows *Honour* on Mankind. *Them that honour me I will honour; and they that despise me, &c.*

(1.) The *Nature* of that *Honour* which is due to God.

There are three sorts of Men to be consider'd with respect to the *Honour* due to God;

(1.) Such as *despise* him instead of honouring him.

(2.) Such as pretend to *Honour* him but do not.

(3.) Such as give him that real *Honour* which is due to him.

(1.) There are such as *despise* him instead of honouring him. Such as the *Sons of Eli* here mention'd, who are said to be the *Sons of Belial*, who knew not the *Lord*. A strange Character of such, who had not only the general *Advantages* of the People of *Israel* to *know God* above all Nations of the World; but a particular *Obligation* to serve and *Worship* him! But those do not *know God* who despise his *Service*. It is impossible to *despise* Infinite *Goodness* and *Power* and *Wisdom*; for those are things, which all that understand them cannot but *Reverence* and highly *Esteem*. For a poor *Creature* to despise his *Creatour*; or one that lives upon the *Bounty* of another to despise his *Benefactour*, seems to be such an *Inconsistency* in *Morality*, as if human *Nature* were incapable of it. But notwithstanding, God himself, who knows the most secret *Thoughts* of Mens *Hearts*, faith here, *They that despise me shall be lightly esteemed*; although God cannot be despised for his glorious *Perfections*; yet his *Authority* may be despised, when Men *presumptuously* break his *Laws*; when they do not regard what he hath *commanded* or *forbidden*; *When they profess to know God, but in works they deny him*; when they own a *God*, and yet live as if there were none, giving themselves over to a *profane* and *irreligious* Temper of *Mind*, if not to all sorts of *Wickedness* in their *Lives*. And if once such a *Temper* prevails, there is nothing to be expected but an *Inundation* of the other. For those who despise *God* and *Religion* can have little *Regard*

to the Differences of Good and Evil; and when once the Awe of God and Conscience is gone, there is nothing can be effectual enough to restrain the violence of Natural Inclinations.

There are two sorts of Profane Persons too easie to be observed in the World. Some are Profane in their Practises; who give way to their Sensual Inclinations and pursue them, as they see occasion, without Reflection or Consideration. These do not presently shake off the Principles of Religion and Vertue, although they Act against them. They know they ought *to fear God and to abstain from evil*; but they do neither, leading a loose, dissolute, and wicked Life, although if they would but consider what they do, they might soon be convinced of the Folly of their Actions; because they Act against those *Principles* which they have seen no Reason to question, but they have not the Grace and Resolution to Observe them. While they continue thus, there is some hold to be taken of them; and although their Sins be against Conscience, yet they are not past Hope; because there is some Life left, but under great Struglings and Decays.

But there are others (I wish I could only say there had been) who are *Profane* out of *Principles*; who not only *Neglect* Religion, but *Despise* it; and *Affront* and *Ridicule* it, as far as they dare with regard to their own Safety. The other are Mischievous to the World by *Example*, but these by *Design*; those are Enemies to themselves and to such as follow them; but these ought to be look'd on, as the Subverters of all that is Good, and the Promoters of all Evil and Mischiefe, and therefore as the truest *Enemies to Mankind* and *the Pest and Bane* of human Society; the Dishonour and Reproach of their Age and Country; and not meerly Enemies to Mankind, but to God himself, the best and wisest Being in the World; whom as far as in them lies, they endeavour to Dethrone from his Sovereignty over it. And where such *Monsters of Impiety* grow numerous and bold, they bode the most fatal Consequences to such a People, where they appear without a Publick Detestation of them.

(2.) There are such who pretend to *Honour* God, but do not. *Honour* is an Act of the Mind, (if it bespoken of real and inward *Honour*, and not of the external Signs of it) and it is in him that gives, and not in him that receives it. But yet those who intend to give *Honour* to another, may do it in such an improper and unsuitable manner, that He for whom it is intended, may look on it as an *Affront* and *Dishonour* to him. Therefore he that would give true *Honour* to another must have a just Apprehension of his Worth and Excellency, and give it in such a manner as is most becoming and agreeable to him.

Now, there are two ways whereby Men may be guilty of Dishonouring God under a pretence of Honouring him.

(1.) By entertaining false Notions of God in their Minds, and Worshiping their own Imaginations instead of him.

(2.) By doing Honour to him, not according to his Nature and Will, but according to their own Intentions and Imaginations.

(1.) By false Notions of God in their Minds, and by Worshiping their own Imaginations instead of him; *i.e.* when persons form in their Minds false Imaginations or Conceptions of him; and so give their Worship not to the true God, but to an Idol of their own Fancy. But there is a great deal of difference between such Conceptions of God in our Minds, which fall short of the Perfections of the Divine Nature,

( as all ours must do for want of Faculties to comprehend him ) and such which attribute something to him which is unworthy of him. Not, that if any happen to be mistaken in their Conceptions of God, we must presently charge them with Idolatry; for the Scripture makes that to lie in an open and publick Dishonouring of God, by giving that Worship which is alone due to him, to any thing besides himself; It is the setting up of another Interest among Mankind in opposition to his Power and Sovereignty; it is such an Exposing the proper Object of Divine Worship as to render it mean and contemptible: For nothing can be a greater Disparagement to the Divine Nature, than to be supposed to be like the Work of Mens Hands; or to have any of his own Creatures to have that Worship given to them which belongs to himself; And so it takes away the due Apprehension, which ought to be always maintained of the Infinite Distance between God and the Workmanship of his Hands. But these Consequences do not reach to inward false Conceptions of God; yet they ought by all possible means to be avoided by those who would give unto God in their Minds the Honour which is due unto him. And to avoid all wrong Apprehensions concerning him, we must settle in our Minds such a fixed Notion of him, as results from those Evidences which prove his Being. For, *the invisible things of God, saith the Apostle, are understood by the things that are made, i. e.* the visible frame of the World doth afford such plain Evidence of the Wisdom, Power and Goodness of the Maker of them, that from thence we may form a distinct and clear Notion of God in our Minds, as a Being Infinitely Wise, Powerful and Good. This is the most natural, easie and orderly Conception we can have of God in our Minds; because it arises from the same Arguments which prove his Being. And when our Minds are fixed and settled herein, the next thing is to exclude all mean and unworthy Thoughts of him, as inconsistent with his Divine Perfections. Therefore, whatever favours of Impotency or Cruelty; whatever tends to abate our Reverence, to lessen our Esteem, to damp our Affections, or to cool our Devotion towards him, cannot be agreeable to those just Conceptions we ought to have always in our Minds concerning him. For the *Honour* of God doth not lie in having such terrible Apprehensions of his Majesty and Power and Justice as may drive us into Horrour and Despair; but in entertaining such an Opinion of his Wisdom, Goodness and Loving kindness as may incline us to Love him and to Trust in his Mercy. And then God is truly honoured by us, when we preserve a deep Sense and Awe of him upon our Minds; when we Adore him for his Infinite Perfections; when we Esteem him as the most proper Object of our Love as well as of our Fear; when we put our Trust and Confidence in him, and depend upon him as to the Conveniencies of this Life and the Happiness of another; when *the desire of our Soul is towards him*, and our Meditation of him is frequent and serious and delightful to us; when *we set him always before us*, and direct the Course of our Lives and Actions to the Pleasing him; when we dare not wilfully do any thing to offend him; but make it our chief study and business to do what tends to his Honour, and to promote it in the World.

It is therefore of very great Consequence, as to the whole Course of Religion to keep up in our Minds, such a true and settled Notion of God, as may influence our Devotion, reform our Disorders, inflame our Affections, and keep us from being led aside by the violent and impetuous

Heats of Imagination. For this is the true Source of most of the Extravagancies of Mankind about Religion; They have no true Notion of God in their Minds, but they dread his Power, and know not how to please him; and so run from one thing to another, through the several methods of Superstitions, or Enthusiasm, as agrees best with their Fancies; which is so unstable and uncertain a Principle, that no steady Course of Religion can be steer'd by it. A Man who acts by Imagination, is like a Ship at Sea without Anchor or Compass, which Rouls up and down just as the Wind and the Waves carry her. But Reason and Understanding is a steady and uniform Principle, and being well fixed from a due and thorough Consideration of the nature and will of God, keeps the Mind even and constant, and goes on its Course as well as it can, and makes its way, notwithstanding the force of the Current and Tide of Natural Inclination be against it; and that the Clouds and Vapors of Imagination often hinder the freedom of its Motion. Nothing is so uncomfortable, nothing so ungovernable as a restless Imagination; and when it is oppressed with a Religious Melancholy, then every thing seems dark and confus'd; we neither know God nor our selves as we ought to do, and we must judge amiss when we judge by such a false Light: And therefore our wisest course in such a case is to be Humble and Patient; to suspend any Peremptory Judgment as to our selves till we have clearer Light, and those Mists and Vapors are dispersed, which darken and perplex our Thoughts.

(2.) Men *Dishonour* God, when they pretend to *Honour* him, not according to his Will, but their own Intentions and Imaginations. There are some things practis'd and defended in the Christian World, which one would hardly think possible to have ever prevailed, had it not been that they thought to do Honour to God by them. I shall not insist upon the pretences in the Church of *Rome* of *Honouring God* against his Will, by giving Divine and Religious Worship to Images, Saints and Angels, &c. because though there be a great deal of Folly and Superstition, and real Dishonour to God in them, yet there is no such Mischief to the rest of Mankind, unless they take up an Imagination that God will be honoured by rooting out and destroying all such as cannot comply with them in their Superstitious Follies. But as the true Spirit of Religion wears off, that of Persecution often comes in the place of it, like Wasps and Hornets out of a dead Carcass. Thus in the *Jewish* Church in our Saviour's time, there was the same outward shew and pomp of Religion, which had been in their best times; and our Saviour himself frequented both the Synagogue Worship and the Solemn Festivals at the Temple; nay he allow'd that the Scribes and Pharisees *sate in Moses's Chair*, and that his Disciples should observe what they taught agreeable to the Law; but yet, he elsewhere charges them that by their Traditionary Doctrines they had enervated the force of the Law; and therefore *they did honour him with their Lips, but their Heart was far from him; i. e.* they had no true Love of God or their Neighbour, but they thought to make amends for all that, by a wonderful zeal for their own Traditions and the lesser things of the Law; which they shewed not only by an unwearied diligence to gain Profelytes, but by destroying all such as oppos'd their Designs; and that not in an ordinary way of Passion and Revenge, but they would needs have all this to be done for the Honour and Service of God. *Whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service.* A strange kind of Service indeed, to

Luk 4. 16.

Mat. 23. 2.

Mat. 15. 8.

Joh. 16. 2.

take away the Lives of his best and most useful *Servants!* But although no Religion in the World be so directly contrary to all Acts of Cruelty and Inhumanity as the Christian is, yet upon the Degeneracy of that, the same kind of Spirit hath risen up and prevailed over too great a part of the Christian World. But especially the very same Jewish Spirit of Zeal and Hypocrisy and Cruelty had enter'd in these last Ages into a Society of Men (whom I need not name) who have undermined the genuine Principles of Morality, inflamed the Spirits of Princes to all the effects of a cruel War and a merciless Persecution; and used their utmost Endeavours to root out all such as dare not Sacrifice their Consciences to the Will of a Prince under their Direction: And which adds to all this, they have the Impudence to assume that Motto to themselves, *Ad majorem Dei Gloriam*; as though they aimed at nothing but doing greater Honour to God. Such as these go beyond *Hophni* and *Phinehas*; for their Wickedness, although great, was confined to a narrow Compass, but these disperse themselves into all States and Kingdoms, and carry on the same uniform Design, *viz.* to do all the Mischief they can under the pretence of Advancing the *Honour* of God.

(3.) But certainly there is a way left to give to *God* that *Honour* which is due to *Him*; otherwise, it were to little purpose to say, *Them that honour me I will honour*. But I shall not take in here all the ways how we may *Honour God*, but consider that which is most proper to the design of these Words. For which we are to observe, that the external Worship and Service of God was in general, well enough kept up and observed in the *Tabernacle* at *Shiloh*. There the High Priest attended, the Daily Sacrifices were offer'd, and the People resorted thither at the Solemn Feasts from all parts of the Land: But the great Examples of Wickedness in the Sons of *Eli* had spread themselves so far, that the People were generally corrupted, and the best part of their Religion, which lies in a *Reformation* of *Manners*, was almost gone. There were some Pious and Devout Persons, such as *Eli* himself (a good Man but a bad Magistrate, being remiss and careless in the Execution of his Office) and no doubt, many among the People, as well as *Elkanah* and *Hannah*, were devout and serious in the Service of God, and other Duties of Religion; but yet God himself takes notice of *the Wickedness of his People Israel*, at the time when the *Ark* was removed from *Shiloh*. And therefore we have Reason to take particular notice of that Passage to *Eli*, concerning the Reason of the Punishment of his House, *because his Sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not*. For, their Sins were of a very Contagious Nature, and by *not restraining them*, the People were run into a great degree of Looseness and Profaneness. So that it was not for *Ely's* Personal Miscarriages, that God thought himself so *dishonoured* by him, but for want of taking due Care for the Suppressing Profaneness and Corruption of *Manners* in others. And this shews the true way how God may and ought to be *Honoured* by those who are bound to take care of others; *viz.* by giving all due Encouragement to true Religion and Vertue, and by making use of the most effectual Means for suppressing Irreligion and Profaneness.

And this indeed is a great and *noble Design* fit for the greatest Minds and Persons of the highest Station to be Employed about. I cannot deny, that it is a difficult Work; for it is easier to subdue the Bodies than the Passions of Men; and how many will rather venture their Lives than mortify their Lusts? And let them pretend what they will,  
we



we find that they will sooner part with any thing than with their Sins. Do we not daily see that they will let go Honour, Reputation, Interest, Health, and the hopes of Heaven, rather than those Vices they have been accustomed to the Practice of? How can we then imagine, that the meer fears of the Execution of humane Laws should presently restrain those, whom no Fear of Hell or Damnation could hitherto Reform? But yet a stop may, and ought to be put to the insolent Growth of Profaneness; for if it be suffered to be too hard for our Laws, it will in time be too hard for all sort of Government. Yet how shall a stop be put to it under such Difficulties? For it cannot be denied, that we have excellent Laws against Vice and Debauchery, and that Magistrates have had sufficient countenance from Authority for the due Execution of them. But yet the Complaints are great of a mighty overflowing of all sorts of Wick- edness still among us; I hope they are not all true; but yet I am afraid, there is too much ground for them. What is the Reason of such a com- plaint of Profaneness and Irreligion among us at a time we pretend so much to Reformation? It is no wonder that the bad Examples of those who ought to Reform others bring Vice into Fashion; but when that cannot be alledged, what is the Reason that good Examples do so little towards the *Reforming* others? It is easie to resolve all into the Corrup- tion of human Nature; but that is a general Answer which serves for all Times and Places, and must suppose them alike: And if it be a good and sufficient Answer, it is to little purpose to talk of *Laws, Religion* and *Reformation*: For unless they may have some Power to alter and a- mend the Course of Mens Actions, they signify very little to the real Benefit of Mankind, no more than *Sea-Marks* do towards hindring the course of the Tide; but meer Examples, although of excellent use to all Ingenuous Minds, yet to others they are but like *Statues of Mercury* in the Road, which point to the right way, but Men will go which way they please notwithstanding.

Therefore to *Laws* and *Examples* the Magistrates *Power* must be ad- ded, which was appointed for this purpose, to be a *Terrour to those that* Rom. 13. 5 *do evil*, as well as an Encouragement to those that do well. And then the Apostle supposeth *the Sword is born in vain*, when the Magistrate is Ver. 4 *not the Minister of God* in this respect; *a Revenger to execute Wrath up- on him that doeth evil*. It was the great and just Honour of Princes of Old, that by their means, Mankind was reduced from a rude and disorderly kind of Life, to the Practice of Civility and Good Manners; and it is as great a Foundation of Honour still, when Men are so much A- postatized from them, to bring them back again to the due Order and Decency of Living. The Case is much harder of those who are Dege- nerate under Laws, than of those who were so without them; for they have learnt to despise their Remedy, and by Arts and Subtilties to avoid the Force of that, which was intended for their Good.

But, however, none ought to be discouraged from so Excellent a De- sign; which Recommends it self to all Wise and Good Men, and will never want the Assistance and Prayers of all that are so; and God him- self will in an especial manner give *Honour* to those who thus *Honour* him in his own way; by using the most *Effectual* means for the Reform- ing the Manners of Men.

But what are those ways which may be called *Effectual*? It's true, that depends upon the Favour and Blessing of God; but it is no hard Mat-

ter for us to judge what are the most likely means to be *Effectual*.  
Such as,

(1.) An Universal Discountenancing of all sorts of Vice and Profaneness, be the Persons of what Rank or Quality soever. For, if those of the *House of Eli* be suffer'd to transgress, the People will follow their Examples; although the good Old Man did not like their doings, but he did not take Care enough to *Restrain* them.

(2.) An even, steady, vigorous and impartial Execution of the Laws against Looseness and Debauchery; so that it may not look like a sudden heat or design of Popularity, but proceeding from a due and well-temper'd Zeal for God and Religion.

(3.) A Wise Choice of fit Instruments to pursue so good an end; I mean such as *Jethro* recommended to *Moses*, *Men of courage and integrity, fearing God and hating Covetousness*. And such I hope are to be found in the several parts of the Nation.

Exod. 18.  
21.

(4.) Lastly, A diligent Inspection into the Behaviour of those who are the proper and immediate Instruments for carrying on so good a Design. For, if there be no Inspection afterwards, it will be look'd on as a meer matter of Form, or an Order given out to satisfy the Importunities of some and the Clamours of others. It were to be wished, that all who are Employ'd in such a Work had an equal mixture of *Wisdom* and *Zeal*; but it is not possible to hinder some from having unequal shares of these; and it is great pity so good a Cause should Miscarry through the Indiscretion of any who are Zealous for it. On the other side, It is possible that some who pretend to an equal Zeal for it in general, may use such Artifices and fair Pretences, as may effectually baffle and undermine it, while they seem to be concerned to promote it. So that, what through the Intemperate Heats of some, the Coldness and Indifferency of others, and the certain Averseness all bad Men have to any real design of *Reformation*, there is a Necessity for such an Affair to be often look'd into, and an Account taken of the Management of it, if any great Advantage be expected by it.

And surely no greater Advantage can be expected as to this World, than from such a Design managed, as it ought to be. For, what can we propose to our selves, that can tend more to promote the *Honour* of *Almighty God*, which we ought above all other things to be concerned for. For, *the Righteous God loveth Righteousness*; and *he abhors all kind of Wickedness*: What then can be more pleasing to him, than to have all sorts of Impiety and Profaneness discountenanced, punished, and if it be possible, rooted out? What can tend more to the *Honour* of his *Vicegerents*, than to shew so much of a Resemblance to him, as to Love what God Loves, and to hate what he hates; and to imploy their Power for the same end which God himself doth his, *viz.* to Advance his Glory and to do good to Mankind? What can tend more to the *Honour* of our *Church* and *Nation*, than to let the World see by such good Works as these, what the *Reformation* is, which we aim at; not meerly of some disputable Points, as to Doctrine and Practise, (which we have earnestly contended for, and with great Reason,) but a true and serious *Reformation* of the Hearts and Lives of Men; without which all our other Pretences will fall infinitely short of what God expects from us, and the very Name of *Reformation* will be a Reproach to us.

II. I now proceed to the second Particular, *viz.* the Rules and Measures which God observes in distributing Honour among Men, *Them that honour us, I will honour; but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.*

Which may be understood two ways;

I As to the Societies of Men which have one Common Interest.

II. As to the Interests and Honour of Particular Persons.

I. As to such Societies of Men, which have one Common Interest. And so it implies, that the Welfare and Reputation, and flourishing Condition of such, depends upon their Zeal and Concernment for God and Religion. But here, we meet very great Difficulties; for *Reason* and *Experience* seem to contradict each other about it. On the one side, it seems most agreeable to the Justice of Divine Providence to Reward and Punish those in this World who will not be capable of being rewarded or punished in another; for there will be no Communities in another World. But on the other side, we cannot deny matter of common experience; for, how long have the *Turkish and Papal Monarchies* (to name no other) flourished, when the *seven Churches of Asia*, and the *Churches of Africa* have been long since destroyed? How strangely hath *Mahometism* spread in the *Eastern* parts of the World? And what a Check hath there been upon the *Reformation* in these *Western* parts? With what a mighty Torrent did it prevail at first? Then it stood at a stand, and hath of late Years gone so much backward, and suffer'd so very much in many parts of it: And yet we think, and that very justly, that the *Honour of God* is concerned in all this. What shall we say to the Insolent Oppressors of Mankind who make no Conscience of ruining Cities and Countries, and offering Violence to the Bodies and Consciences of Men to Advance and Support their own Grandeur; and yet have been suffer'd to prevail so far as to be made an Argument against Providence by Atheistical Men? It is to be hoped that God in his own time will vindicate his *Honour* and clear this point to the Satisfaction of all reasonable Men; but yet, we cannot penetrate into the Wisdom and Secrets of Providence. God will (no doubt) take care of his own *Honour*; but he is not bound to give such Men an Account of the Ways and Methods and Seasons of his doing it. He often raises up a Nation fit for his purpose, and makes them as a Scourge to Neighbour Nations; and when they have done his Work, he suffers them to be humbled; if not destroyed, by the same Methods they have used to others. Sometimes he raises up one Kingdom and Nation against another, when their Sins make them ripe for Vengeance; and so he takes the Potshards of the Earth and breaks them upon one another; and thus, by their mutual Punishment, they both become the Executioners of his Wrath; and we cannot determine by the event which was in the greater Guilt. So that God takes Care of his own *Honour*, by Methods we are not able to comprehend. For who can weigh the Nations in a Balance, and determine how far the Sins of one doth exceed the other? And if we cannot know the Number and Aggravation of a Peoples Sins, we can never fix the Measures and Degrees of their Punishment. But, however, some things are certain;

(I.) That the Sins of a Nation do naturally tend to the Weakness and Dishonour of it. Thus a factious, seditious, turbulent Temper, not only is the Reproach of a People, but the ready way to destroy it. And yet

yet it hath so happen'd, that when the Factions have been almost equally poised, as at *Rome* and *Carthage*, they have rais'd such an Emulation between them, which by their endeavours to outvie each other, hath for some time preserved their Country. Who can deny that Luxury and Debauchery, and all sorts of Intemperance, not only sink the Reputation of a People, but effeminates and softens them, and makes them Careless and Idle, Regardless of any thing but what makes for their own Ease and Voluptuousness? And in all humane probability, such a Nation must sink, when a People of more Wisdom and Courage and Resolution, makes it their business to overcome them. So that these sorts of Sins are *Natural Causes* of weakning the Power and Interest of a Nation. But there are other Sins, as Profaneness and Contempt of God and Religion, Hypocrisy, Idolatry, &c. and of such which Work as *Moral Causes*, God himself is the only Judge, when the Measure of their Iniquity is filled up.

*Eudem. 1.*  
7. c. 14.

(2.) Sometimes God steps out of his Ordinary Method and Course of Providence, either in a way of Judgment or Mercy. And then he more particularly shows, that *those that Honour him, he will honour; and those who despise him shall be lightly esteemed.* These things are not every days Experience, but when they do happen they deserve to be taken notice of, in a more than ordinary manner. *Aristotle*, who was no great Friend to Providence, as to humane Affairs, professes, that he did not know what to make of *the extraordinary Success some Persons had in their Affairs, without any extraordinary visible Causes.* It is possible, he might have the Success of his *Macedonian Friends* in his Thoughts; who swallow'd up the *Common-wealths* of Greece, as so many Morfels, and then destroy'd the mighty *Persian Monarchy.* But in these Cases, he allows a *Divine Impulse*, carrying them on beyond the Ordinary Measures of humane Prudence; and overruling so many things in Order to Success, as nothing but a Divine Hand could manage. And when great Advantages come to a Nation in such a manner, a more than Ordinary Degree of Thankfulness is justly expected, that God may be *honoured* in a particular manner for the Deliverance he Works by such Means, and the Mercies he bestows or continues thereby.

(2.) As to particular Persons; how far this holds, will appear by these things.

(1.) That Esteem and Honour naturally follows the Opinion of another's Desert or Excellency. For it is not an Arbitrary thing, but is founded on the Supposition of something that deserves it. It is like the Assent given to Mathematical Evidence, which is not because they will do it, but because they cannot help it.

(2.) The Sincere Practise of Piety and Vertue doth command Esteem and Reverence. Hypocrisy indeed lessens it to the utmost degree; because it argues a mean and false temper of Mind; but there is nothing in true Religion but what tends to raise Esteem, for it implies all the things which are allow'd by all Persons to gain *Honour* among Men. For one that is truly Religious is a true Lover of God and of Mankind; he is grateful to his Benefactor, and always owns in the most solemn manner his Dependence upon him, both by Prayers and Praises; he is ready to do good to all Men, as far as is consistent with his Duty to God; he is just, righteous, and merciful, sober and temperate in the whole course of his Life; he acts not by Chance, or for bye Ends; but by a fixed Principle of being and doing Good; he keeps himself within the Bounds  
which

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which God hath set him; and with Chearfulness and Resolution sets himself to do and suffer his Will; and hath so much Courage, as to dare to do his Duty, and is afraid of nothing so much as Offending God. And now let any one judge, whether there be any thing Mean or Contemtable in all this; whether every one that hears this Character doth not wish it belonged to himself. And that is a certain token that it brings Honour and Esteem with it.

Let me then, for a Conclusion of all, Recommend the Practise of *Religion* and *Vertue* to all such as are the most concerned for *Honour* and *Esteem*. The World is always vain enough to flatter Greatness, either out of Weakness or Design; but true Greatness of Mind despises Flattery; and where that is wanting in any, this very Flatterer despises them. But this is a way to be above the reach of Contempt, *To do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God;* and these are the things which God himself assures us are the main parts of our Duty. If we be Careless of God's Honour and Service now, the time will shortly come, when we shall heartily wish we had been otherwise. For, how great soever your *Honour* be now, you and that together must in a little time be *laid in the Dust*. And then the main Difference will be according to the *Honour* we have done to God; for, although the Text doth hold good, as to this World, as I have already shew'd; yet the most glorious Accomplishment of it will be in the Life to come; for, then it will be made Evident to all Mankind, that *those that honour him, God will honour; and they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed.* <sup>Micah 6. 8.</sup>

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# S E R M O N L.

A

## Funeral Sermon.

MATTHEW XXVI. 39.

*Oh my Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

**I**T is not long since we met together in this place, to lament the Loss of one hopeful Branch of that Family, whereof there are now two more cut off in the Vigour of their Years, in the midst of their Relations, by a sad and unexpected stroke of Divine Providence: When Crosses come single, they are hard enough for us to Encounter withall; but when one Breach makes way for another, when Grief follows upon Grief, when their number and their weight encrease together, and exercised Patience may be ready to faint, and a Soul not unacquainted with Sorrows, may sink under the weight of so heavy a Burthen. When Afflictions come gradually, and keep a good distance from each other, the notice they give us of their approach, and the breathing space between them, make us more fit to bear them; but when they come upon us by surprize, and one close upon the neck of another, they not only baffle Reason, but Grace it self gives way to the first impressiion, and recovers its Power only by gaining time to employ it: But so just and equal is the mixture of these things here below, that those only who have the greatest Comforts, can have the greatest Losses; they only who have many Friends to enjoy, have many to lose, and therefore many to lament; and the higher Esteem and Value they have for them, while they enjoy them, the greater their Sorrow and Affliction must be, when they are deprived of them; so that those very things, which by their presence makes our Lives most Comfortable, do by their uncertainty make them most Miserable; and those very Passions whereby we most express our Joy and Satisfaction, do lay the Foundation for those which cause our greatest disquiet, to wit, our Fears and our Grievs; for the more we love, the more we fear to lose, and when we have lost, the more sadness seizes upon our Minds by it; so that upon the Principles of Nature and Reason, we live upon these Terms in the World; either we must not expect more and greater Blessings than others, or we must expect to go through more and greater Crosses and Afflictions than others; and therefore all those who value the Contentment of their Lives, must so proportion

proportion their Joys, as to make account of the Sorrows, which are consequent upon them; if they would have their Troubles lessened, their Comforts must be so too; if they would have greater ease in their Sufferings, they must have less delight in their Enjoyments; if we have our Days of Prosperity, wherein we Rejoyce more than others, we must look for our Days of Adversity, wherein to consider more than others, for *God hath set these one against the other*, Eccles. 7. 14. to the end that those who have the largest share of the one, must expect it in the other also.

Yea, so great and Universal a Connexion there is between Joys and Sufferings, that one seems to make way for the other, the latter being so necessary a Preparation for the former, that the Son of God, when he was to be made partaker of that infinite joy *that was set before him*, found the way to it, to be by the greatest Sufferings; he must *despise the Shame and endure the Cross*, before he could attain it; he who was to be the *Author of Eternal Salvation to all that obey him*, did learn Obedience by the things which he Suffered, and *in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death*, among all which we have none more remarkable, than that we read of here in the words of the Text, where it is said, that he fell upon his Knees, and said *Oh my father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt*; which words were chosen by that truly Vertuous and Religious Lady, at whose Funeral we are now met, to be the Subject of our present Discourse, which are very considerable, whether we consider the occasion of them, or the matter contained in them.

I. The occasion of them: He was now apprehensive that the hour of his Enemies was come, *and the power of darkness*; he had hitherto been going up and down doing good, but now the time was come for his acting the more sad and tragical part of his Life; and that he might the better prepare himself for it, he withdrew from the City, and he and his Disciples pass over the Brook *Cedron*, and go to a place at the foot of the Mount of Olives, called *Gethsemane*, ver. 36. that is, a place where many Olive Presses were; here was the Garden our Saviour usually retired into, as appears *Luke 22. 39.* and when he came thither, as *Abraham* left his Servants behind him, when he was to Sacrifice his Son on Mount *Moriab*, *Gen. 22. 5.* so did our Saviour leave his Disciples at some distance from him, when he was preparing himself for that great Sacrifice, whereby he offered up himself to God: And now begins the time of his Agony, and that vehement Conflict which was between the inclinations of his Nature, and the purpose of his Will, from the Sense of which he cries out to his Disciples, *v. 38. my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death*, than which there can be no expression higher, either respecting the extension of it, that his Sorrow would continue unto Death, or the intension of it, that it was a deadly Sorrow, so great and heavy, that none can be imagined greater; hence it is said, *Mark 14. 33.* that he did begin *ἐκθαμβεύσθαι καὶ ἀδύμονεῖν*, to be sore amazed, and very heavy; *ἀδύμονεῖν* is (*λίαν λυπεῖσθαι*) saith *Suidas*, to be exceeding sorrowful; and *ἀγωνιάω*, saith *Hesychius*, to be in an Agony, see *Luke 22. 44.* which appears by the circumstance of it, that he sweat as it were drops of Blood; which seems not to be a meer Comparison, or an Hyperbolical Expression, but to be that which the Physicians call

διαπύδων, when the Serous Blood is grown so thin and hot as to find a passage out at the Pores of the Body, as in an extraordinary Sweat it may do by rarifying the Tunicles of the Vessels, wherein the Blood runs; so *Maldonate* tells us of one at *Paris* in his time, who had drops of Blood mingled with his Sweat, at the hearing the Sentence of Death pronounced against him, though a person of a very strong Constitution; but much more easily may it be supposed, in so tender and delicate a Temper as our Saviour was of: But he sinks not under the fears of his Nature, but shews us which way best to relieve our selves under all our Troubles, which is by our Prayers to that God, who alone is able to deliver us out of them, or support us under them; so our Saviour now Prays according to the present depth of his Sorrow, with the greater vehemency and earnestness; *Oh my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, &c.*

II. The Matter of the Words, wherein we consider four things; 1. The Person to whom he makes his Address, *Oh my Father.* 2. The Matter of his Request, *let this Cup pass from me.* 3. The Manner or the Earnestness of it, *if it be possible.* 4. The Submission of it, *nevertheless not my will, but thine be done.*

I. The Person to whom this Address is made, *O my Father*; that notes three things. 1. his Love and Tenderneſs. 2. his Care and Providence. 3. his Interest and Relation.

1. His Love and Tenderneſs, *Oh my Father*; Words of greater Emphasis than all the Rhetorick imaginable, such as expreſs the Bowels and Compaſſion of God to his Children; *where is thy zeal and thy strength, the ſoundneſs of thy bowels and mercy towards me? doubtleſs thou art our Father,* ſaith the Church, *Iſaiah 63. 15.* implying all the love and tenderneſs imaginable in that Relation; if it were ſo to the Church, how much more to the Son of God himſelf, concerning whom he had declared, *this is my well beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed*; might not he with confidence pray to him to be delivered from his Fears and Agonies; if there were ſo much force in thoſe Words of *Cæſar* to *Brutus*, and *thou my Son*, to upbraid him with his Diſingenuity; there is as great in theſe to prevail with God for Kindneſs and Favour, *Oh my Father*; which is as much as if he had ſaid; “ If thou haſt ever owned me for thy Son, and haſt the pity of a Father towards me, Reſcue me from my preſent Sorrows and future Pains; I need plead no more with thee, than that thou art my Father; I have hitherto Glorified thy Name, and done the Work thou ſenteſt me to do; if it be agreeable to thy infinite Love and Wiſdom, I pray thee free me from that bitter Cup, which I am now to drink ſo deeply of.

2. His Care and Providence, *Oh my Father*, who haſt alwaies been a refuge to thy People in the Day of their Troubles; “ Oh thou that haſt expreſſed thy Power and thy Goodneſs in the Preſervation of thy Children, in the miſt of all their Diſtreſſes! Oh thou whoſe Eye is always watchful for their good, and whoſe Hand is ſtretched out for their reſcue in the hour of Temptation! Oh thou whoſe Pity to thy Creatures is equal to their Infirmities, who not only knoweſt the weakneſs of their frame, and conſidereſt that they are duſt, but as a Father pitieth his Children, ſo doeſt thou them that fear thee! Shew thy Pity towards me now in relieving the weakneſs of human Nature in the burthen it now lies under, let it not ſink under the weight

“ which



“ which now oppresseth it, charge no more upon it, than thou givest  
 “ it strength to endure; let it not fail in the beginning of this sharp  
 “ Encounter, let not the Garden where now I am be my *Golgotha*, but  
 “ as thou hast hitherto enabled me to do thy Will, let me go on to  
 “ suffer it, for doubtless thou art my Father, therefore leave not my  
 “ Soul in these Agonies, nor suffer thine Holy one to faint in this time  
 “ of Tryal.

3. His Interest and Relation, *Oh my Father*, “ Thou who wert my  
 “ Father before ever the World was; thou who hast sent me into the  
 “ World upon thy own Message and Errand, and hast hitherto own-  
 “ ed me in it for thy Son, and given so many and large Testimonies of  
 “ thy paternal Love and Kindness towards me; thou who before in the  
 “ presence of the People hast more than once testified by a Voice from  
 “ Heaven, that I am thy *Beloved Son*, let me find now the benefit of  
 “ that Relation which I bear unto thee; Oh let not thy only Son feel  
 “ the severe strokes of thy Displeasure, which hath made it his only  
 “ care and business to Glorify thy Name on Earth, and to bring others  
 “ to an Admiration of thee! Oh forsake me not, while I forsake not  
 “ thee, I have not shunn’d to declare thy Will, let me not sink in suffer-  
 “ ing it; nay, let me plead mine Interest with thee, *Oh my Father!*  
 “ Thou who hast hearkned to the Intercessions of thy People of old, on  
 “ behalf of others, when thou threatnedst to punish, reject not the hum-  
 “ ble Supplications of thy Son, who thus Begs for himself, that if it  
 “ be possible this Cup may pass from him.

2. And surely it must be some extraordinary matter which the Son of  
 God was so earnest with his Father to be delivered from, which may ei-  
 ther relate to what he then felt, or to what he feared; if to what he  
 felt, it was to be eased of those bitter Agonies of his Soul, which he  
 was then under; or if, as it is most probable, it related to what he feared,  
 then it was his earnest Prayer that if it were agreeable with the Will and  
 Wisdom of God, he might be delivered from that bitterness of Death,  
 which he foresaw he was shortly to undergo. And this he was so ear-  
 nest in, that he not only pleads with God by ordinary Arguments, but  
 goes to the utmost degrees of possibility in his present circumstances;  
 which is the third thing.

3. The manner and earnestness of our Saviours request, *if it be possible*;  
 St. *Luke* therefore saith, that our Saviour *prayed more earnestly*, that is,  
 with greater vehemency of expression now than at any other time; he  
 doth not plead any Promise from God, but urgeth him with the extent  
 of his Power, and the consistency of what he prayed for, with the De-  
 sign that God had to carry on in the World, not but that it was ab-  
 solutely possible for God to have delivered his Son from all his Sufferings,  
 but that the earnestness is seen in that, that now if his end could be car-  
 ried any other way, than by drinking that bitter Cup, he begs that it  
 may pass from him; as though he had said, “ *Oh my Father!* I am now  
 “ designed for a bloody Sacrifice, to be offered up to thy self by the  
 “ hands of cruel and malicious Men; but I know their Power can ex-  
 “ tend no farther than thy Will is to let them go; if it be therefore agree-  
 “ able to those infinite ends of Goodness, Justice and Wisdom, which I  
 “ came into this World to accomplish, that I may escape the Fury and  
 “ Malice of these Men, and that bitter Death, which they design me  
 “ for, appear now in my behalf, and let them see how much greater  
 “ thy Love to me is, than their greatest Malice against me; if any o-

“ther way may be found out, whereby I may become an Expiation for  
 “the Sins of the World, than by being delivered into the hands of un-  
 “reasonable Men, now appear for the Vindication of my Innocency  
 “and thine own Own Honour which is concerned in it : Is there no o-  
 “ther way to purge the World from Sin, but by adding to the number  
 “of it, in taking away my Life ? Will no other Sacrifice appease thine  
 “Anger, but that of thy Son’s Blood ? Is there no other means of at-  
 “toning thy Majesty, but by making my Soul an Offering for Sin ? Why  
 “must I pass through so many grievous Pains, and such a shameful  
 “Death ? That I may *make an end of Sin and bring in everlasting Righte-*  
 “*ousness*, exalt me to thy Glory now, and then by my Power and Grace  
 “I will bring the World to the Love of thee ; then the great Offence  
 “will be prevented, which will be taken by the World at so Ignomi-  
 “nious a Death of the Son of God : Then thy Power and Goodness  
 “will be seen without any Impeachment of thine Honour or Justice in  
 “the Punishment of so Innocent a Person, as thou knowest me to be :  
 “Then thy Love to thy Son and to Mankind will be seen together : Oh  
 “let me not become a Reproach to the Foolish, a Scorn to the Proud,  
 “and a Sacrifice to Malitious Men ! But if this be the way, which in  
 “thine infinite Wisdom thou judgest most fit to declare to the World  
 “thy hatred against Sin, and thy Love to all that shall repent of it ;  
 “to manifest thy Justice and thy Mercy together ; to perswade the  
 “World by the most powerful Arguments to Obedience and Thankful-  
 “ness ; if this be the way whereby thou hast designed to advance my  
 “humanity to Power and Glory ; here I am, and I shew my self to be  
 “a Sacrifice to thee, by thus offering up my will to thee, and by  
 “conquering the contrary inclinations of my Nature, that I may not  
 “be only a Sin-Offering, but a Freewill-Offering to thee, and therefore  
 “*not as I will, but as thou wilt* ; in which Words we have,

4. The patient Submission of Christ to the will of God, wherein we have two things.

1. The seeming repugnancy between the will of God and of Christ.

2. The Submission of the will of Christ, to the will of God, *not as I will, but as thou wilt*.

1. The seeming repugnancy between the will of God and of Christ ; not as tho’ Christ had really any other purpose or design than what God had intended him for ; but this only speaks the strength of his natural Inclinations and the averseness of his human Nature to the Sufferings he was to undergo : But if it be asked why the human Nature of Christ was liable to such Infirmities as these are, a sufficient account of it may be given in these particulars.

1. It shewed a greater power of Goodness, to conquer these natural Inclinations, than not to have them at all ; there is no Vertue at all to be wholly insensible of Pain, and if this were a Perfection, Stocks and Stones would be the most excellent Creatures : Our Saviour who was freed from the sinful Imperfections of human Nature, yet was not without the Natural ; to let us see these are not inconsistent with the greatest Goodness, and that the Power of Grace is seen in keeping of our selves from being mastered by them. If Christ had been in our Nature and wholly exempted from the common Infirmities which do attend it, the World would have questioned whether he had been truly Man or no ; ( as some did notwithstanding ) or if he were, how far his actions could have been a Pattern for us to follow ; since he had not those things

things to combat withall, which we are encompassed about with: To satisfie us therefore of these things, the Son of God finds Agonies in his Breast, when he was going to suffer, thereby discovering to us that the truest Patience is not a Stoical Apathy, but a due Government of our natural Inclinations, so that they break forth into nothing repugnant to the Will of God.

2. That he might have greater Compassion towards his People under all their Infirmities, this the Apostle thought to be a very great Reason, why our Saviour was compassed about with Infirmities, and was in all things tempted as we are, that he might as our High-Priest be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities, and have compassion on us, whilst we are wrestling with them. He knows what humane Nature is, and what all its Passions and Weaknesses are; he knows the combats of our Minds, and the vehement Inclinations of our Natures; he knows how ill we can bear with the Thoughts of Death, especially when infamy is added to it, and therefore we may with greater assurance draw nigh to him, who is so ready, and knows to pity; having himself been once in the Body, and therefore knows what the Weight and Burden of it is; if we weep for the loss of Friends, we read when *Lazarus* was dead, that *Jesus wept*; if we are in Agonies and Combats in our Minds, when Death approacheth us, Christ himself was so before us; if we pray with vehemency and earnestness for God to deliver us from Reproach and Pain, and the Bitterness of Death, the Son of God did so when he was encompassed with the Infirmities of our Natures; only as we follow him in the Inclinations of his Nature, let us do so too in a due Submission to God's Will, notwithstanding them, *nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

2. Which is the second thing considerable, wherein we see Nature striving, but Grace triumphing in the Conquest of it; it is the great Glory of Grace not to extirpate, but to conquer and govern natural Inclinations; to raise the Mind of a Man above them, to a full resignation of it self to the Wisdom and Counsel of Heaven; when in imitation of our Saviour we come to say, "Oh God, if it be possible, keep the bitterness of Death from me, rescue me from the power of the Grave, and from the Fears of that great Devourer, spare me a little longer, that I may not be cut off in the midst of my Days, and the Flower of my Years, cut me not down while I am yet green, and not ripe for the Grave, continue me at least in a capacity to serve thee here: These are Expressions justifiable by our Saviour's Words, but yet as these shew the Inclinations of our Nature, we are then most happy, when through the Power of Divine Grace, we can conclude all as Christ doth here, with that intire Submission to the Will of God, *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

Two things may be here enforced.

I. There is an aversion in Humane Nature from the pangs and bitterness of Death.

II. That notwithstanding that, there are grounds of Submission to the Will of God in it.

I. That there is an aversion in Humane Nature from the pangs and bitterness of Death, this was apparent in our Lord himself, and therefore no wonder if it be found in us, in whom it ariseth from some or all of these following Causes.

i. From

1. From the natural Love that is in us of this present Life and the Comforts of it. The Soul and Body after so close an Union with each other, are very unwilling to part; because the Soul will then miss its Companion and Servant, and the Body its Life and Motion. This breeds a natural Abhorrency of Death, as of a State of Violence and Separation, and therefore no wonder if there be a regret in mens minds at the first Apprehension of it: But besides this, the Contentments which Men have enjoyed in this present state, and the agreeableness of them to the way we now judge of things by, makes us more averse to the thoughts of leaving this, and entering into that which we have had no experience at all of; so that were there nothing in Death, but a change of state, that would make the thoughts of it troublesome and unpleasing to us; especially when we think we must forego all those Contentments of Life, which we have sometimes thought to have been more dear to us than life it self, when the Bonds of dearest Relations are suddenly dissolved, and the Tyes of the closest Friendship broken in pieces; when Husband and Wife who have lived so long together in the most intimate Friendship as well as Union, shall in a moment be parted, as far as Heaven and Earth from one another; when the tender Mother shall be torn away from the Embraces of her Children, and the Children snatched out of the Mother's Arms, and that without hopes of seeing each other again, till the great Day of Resurrection, these things must needs cause a natural aversion from Death in us.

2. The Apprehension of the Consequents of Death, works an aversion in humane Nature; though Death in it self be unpleasing, yet it never appears so dreadful, as when it is represented to us with all that train which follows it; the Fears of Pains in Death make it terrible to tender and delicate Natures; but the Fears of the Pains which may follow it, as to us, make it dreadful to the most wise and considering; were it only to leave this World, the Disappointments, and Cares, and Vexations of it, would at one time or other make most persons contented to part with it; but to think of the great Tribunal, and the Account which must there be given, and the irreversibile Sentence which will be past upon it, makes them willing to continue here, and be very well contented with the Troubles of this Life, so they may escape the Miseries of another.

3. Want of a firm Confidence in God; not so much out of a distrust of God as of themselves, as they think, but really there is a mighty distrust of God, which makes them unwilling to venture themselves into an Eternal State upon his Word and Promises; no wonder if they be afraid of dying, who are distrustful of God; for such cannot assure themselves what God would do with them in another World, and an Almighty Power may justly affright those, who have no firm dependance on Almighty Goodness.

II. That there are sufficient Grounds of Submission to the Will of God in this, as in any other Instance of Divine Providence; and a threefold consideration is suggested to us in the Words of the Text; 1. It is a Cup, 2. It is a Father that gives it, and 3. It is his Will that we should drink of it.

1. It is a Cup.

1. It is a Cup that must be drunk at one time or other by us, some may escape it longer than others, but the best, the wisest, the strongest, the

the most usefull must all taste the same bitter Cup, and therefore why should we complain when it comes to our turn; things which can never be avoided, ought always to be prepared for; God gives us warning enough, we see it going round, and some Younger than our selves have Drunk it off already, and why should we think our case harder than others, if it comes to our share at last.

2. It is a Cup that may have more sweetness than bitterness in it, if it be not our fault: It is a Cup of Salvation to all them that obey the Gospel of Christ; it is that which will bring deliverance to them from all the Fears, Troubles and Temptations which they have conflicted with in this Life: It is that which will not only put an end to their Sorrows, but conduct them into the Mansions of Bliss and Happiness, and what then should make them think much of drinking that without which they can never enjoy what they most desire.

3. It is a Cup, that our Saviour himself hath tasted before us, even he who prayed here to be delivered from it, yet he submitted to it with great Patience; he drunk off the Dregs of it himself, that so the Bitterness of it may not come to our share. Our Physician hath encouraged us to drink off this Potion, by taking off the greatest and bitterest part himself. Why should we complain, when the Son of God submitted on purpose that we should have no Reason to complain? He hath cleared the way, secured the passage, and gone before us in it to glory, and shall we think our case hard, that we are to follow after him to so glorious an End?

2. It is a Father that gives the Cup.

1. A Father, that knows what is fittest to be given us; he knows both what and when it is most suitable for us; he suffers not these things to be managed by blind and uncertain Causes, but hath the disposal of them all in his own Hands: A Father, that is infinitely wiser than we are, and we are always safe when we yield our Wills to his; therefore our Saviour elsewhere speaks, *The Cup which my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?* There is more sweetness, that it is a Cup of a Father's giving, than there can be bitterness in the Cup it self: He is the Modimperatour, the Governour of this Society, he distributeth the Cup when and to whom he pleaseth, and we ought to drink it, as receiving it from his Hands.

Luk. 18.  
11.

2. A Father, that stands by his Children to help and assist them; that is ready to give them strength proportionable to their Tryal, that will never leave them in the Hour of Temptation, but will find a way for them to escape, or enable them to bear it; even in the midst of the Valley of the Shadow of Death he hath a Rod to guide them, and a Staff to uphold them, and why then should they be afraid.

3. A Father that will abundantly reward the taking of what he gives; he stands ready with a Crown in his Hand to reward those that endure patiently to the End; and that with a Reward Infinite and Unconceivable, which we may sooner hope to enjoy than to comprehend. And what greater reason of Submission can there be than this?

3. It is the Will of a Father that it should be so, and therefore,

1. It is to no purpose to resist, we are not able in the least to stand it out against him, or to defend our selves one minute from his power; and why then should we ever dispute the cause with God? He that contendeth with the Almighty, let him instruct him; he that reprovethe God, let him answer it; can you over-reach his Wisdom, frustrate

strate

strate his Councils, disappoint his Purposes, confine his Power, impeach his Justice; if not, why do you not comply with his most holy Will?

2. It is our greatest interest to submit; for there is Reason and Power on God's side, and there is Duty and Interest on ours; how quick might our Minds be in all Conditions, if we would leave God to govern our Affairs, and take care only of our selves to govern our Minds: God doth not deny us the liberty of praying to him, when we find the bitter Cup coming near, that if it be possible, it may pass from us, but let us still be sure to bring our Minds to our Saviour's Temper at last, to conclude all with an intire Submission to God, and to say as he did, *nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

And thus it was with that Excellent Person at whose Funeral we are now met together, who when in the beginning of her Sickness, she had prayed that this Cup might pass from her, and afterwards, that if it seemed good to God, it might not pass from her, yet concluded both with an equal Submission to God's Will, and said still, *not my will, but thine be done.*

And having thus done with the Text, I hope I may have the greater liberty to speak concerning this Deceased Lady, because of the great opportunity Divine Providence hath of late given me of knowing many things concerning her, both in her Health, and in her Sickness; in both which I observed her to be so exemplary a Person, that if we follow her steps, we may neither be ashamed to live, nor afraid to die; and therefore I hope what I shall say concerning her, will be as far from any suspicion of Flattery, as of Falshood; for I come not hither to flatter any, nor to make a Panegyrick upon one, who now as little needs our Praises, as she would have valued them, had she been yet living among us; but excellent Examples ought not to be slightly passed over by us; it is part of our Duty to those who have been more than ordinarily good to preserve their Memories, and by proposing their Examples to encourage others to be so too; I need not speak therefore of those things, which were common to her self, with many other persons of her Rank and Quality in the World, nor of the Endowments of her Mind, which were more than ordinary; nor of her singular Prudence in the Management of Domestick Affairs; nor of her great Affection to her Husband, her care and good Government of her Children, her Faithfulness and Sincerity to her Friends, her universal civility and obliging Carriage to all; all which are indeed very commendable Things, and remarkable in her. Yet having so great a choice of Matter to speak of, I shall confine my self to those things which were the most eminent in her self, and deserve the most to be imitated by others, in and among which were especially considerable—

1. Her great seriousness in Religion. For she put not off her great Work till she came to die, and that made her die with the greater comfort. She knew why she was a Christian, and that made her live here like one; and the sincerity of her mind in Religion yielding her that Serenity of her Thoughts when she was to leave the World, she looked on Religion as a matter of that Weight and Consequence, that she equally abhorred the Hypocritical and the jesting Trifler with it, thinking no seriousness too great for such matters, whereon the eternal Welfare and Salvation of Souls did depend. And as one that loved Religion, and judged it her greatest Friend, she conversed most with it in private, in her secret Retirements twice a Day, wherein she did

did not pray and read the Scriptures or other Books of Piety, merely to satisfy her self or others, that she had done them, but took an account of her self, of her improvement by them; and no Occasion or Company, though otherwise never so pleasing to her, were thought a sufficient excuse by her, for neglecting the great Matters of her Soul. She was very inquisitive after the matters of her Soul, and future state, and her preparations were according to her inquiries. She lived in an expectation of dying, and therefore made Provision before-hand for her departure out of this World; her most intimate Friends she discoursed withal most freely about the great Affairs of Eternity, and thought no time spent, so well improved, as that which was spent in order to them: Her zeal for Religion was proportionable to the weight of Things, thinking some things as much beneath it, either in being for or against them, as for Men to be eternally disputing about the Colours of the Rainbow, or the Figure of the Motes which fly in the Air.

2. Her great Humility, and mean apprehension of her self. I scarce ever met with one, who had a truer Understanding of the matters of greatest Consequence, joyn'd with a greater Diffidence of her self, than she always expressed; this made her not so much known, as otherwise she might have been, but it made her so much the more valued by all that knew her; she used her judgment most, where she expressed it least, and in those Discourses, in which she would sit by as one unconcerned, she was a careful observer, and a severe Judge of the Things, though not of the Persons.

3. Her great contempt of the World. It may be a greater instance of this nature cannot be met with, of one that did less value the things that others hazard their Souls for than she did; often declaring her self, that she knew no other considerable use of an Estate, but to do good by it: And this she would frequently attribute, as one of the good effects of it, to the long Sickness she formerly had, which she told me in her last Sickness, she had yet cause to bless God for, because by that she understood the World much better, and consequently valued it much less than ever she did before; and although she had great Contentments in this World in her near Friends and Relations, yet her Mind was still kept above them, and consequently she declared to me in her Health, with what Contentment of Mind she could part with all the things in this World, and if there was nothing more she said to be feared in Death, than only that, she wondred that any should be afraid of it; which discovered her great convictions of the Vanity of this Life, and the great things of it, and of the certainty of that to come; but while she was in this World she hated to be unuseful in it, and therefore was very exemplary; for,

4. Her Charity and readiness to do good; expressing that upon all occasions, where she knew or could find out Objects fit to express her kindness upon; having as I have heard, before she came to the enjoyment of that plentiful Estate she lived in before her Death, laid aside considerable Sums to be disposed of that way. If she heard of any Poor that were Sick, she would first understand what it was they most wanted, and that she was sure to provide for them, without being asked: Thus she shewed her Religion to be pure and undefiled, by not only keeping her self from the least suspicion of the pollution of the World, but by visiting the Fatherless and Widows in their Afflictions. Thus she

lived in the World, as one that will be missed now she is gone, and yet as one who prepared her self for her going out of it; and sometime before her last Sickness, she would often let fall expressions, while she went with her last Child, that the time was coming, when an end would be put to all her troubles here; and this upon her first illness after her Delivery, she was very apprehensive of, and expressed it to those about her. Although at first she had some fears and strugglings in her Nature from the apprehension of Death, yet when her Fits seized upon her with more than ordinary violence, she lay with the greatest willingness to die, and not only so, but rejoicing in the hopes of it, and praying earnestly that it might come to pass, and when in her last Convulsion Fits, we were praying for her Life, she during the Intermissions she had, prayed as earnestly for her departure out of the World, and God was pleased by the sad event, to declare, that her Prayers were more agreeable to his Will than ours were, by taking her out of this vain and sinful World, which she despised so much, to the Happiness she valued, the eternal Enjoyments of God in a better Life. More, grief and the time fail me to add. And though we have reason to lament our loss of her, and did heartily pray that *this Cup might pass from her*, yet since God hath declared his Will, let us submit ours to his, and never murmur at this however sad dispensation of his Providence, but let us follow our Saviour, not only in his Words, but in the inward Temper of his Mind, when he said, *not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

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**F I N I S.**

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## Incidentally insisted upon and Explained.

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