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THE
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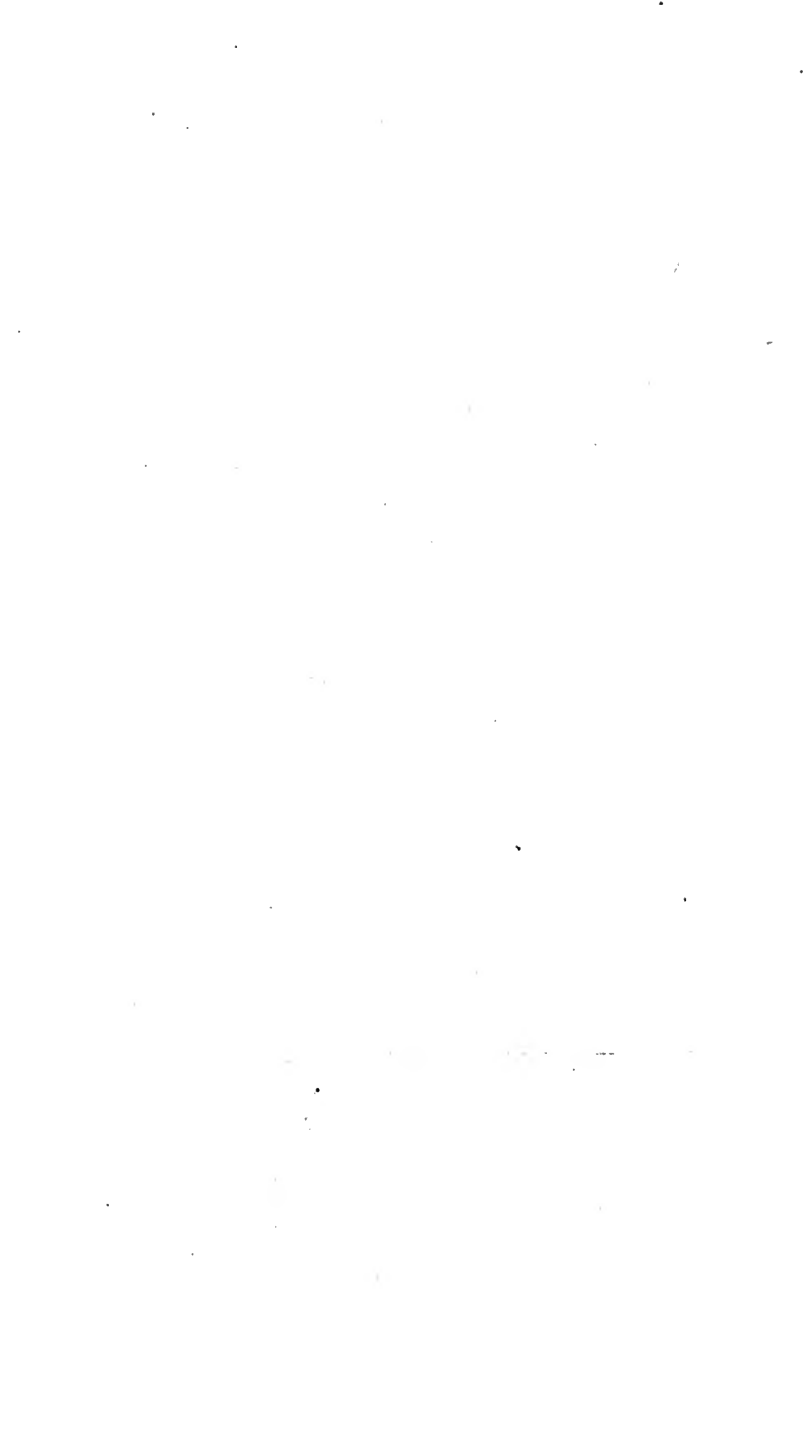
All the Sermons, Discourses, and Tracts
published in his Life-Time.

In FOUR VOLUMES.

L O N D O N:

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MDCCLVII.



S E R M O N S

ON THE

Following SUBJECTS,

V I Z.

The Duty of Peaceableness.	The Fear of Death a natural Passion.
The Grounds of Anniversary Days.	On what Grounds we may desire not to live always.
Considerations on Time and Eternity.	The great Usefulness of good Examples.
Dying in Faith.	On the Resurrection of Jesus.
The Purposes of men broken off by Death.	On living unto Christ.
Death abolished by Jesus Christ.	

By the Reverend Mr. HENRY GROVE,
of TAUNTON.

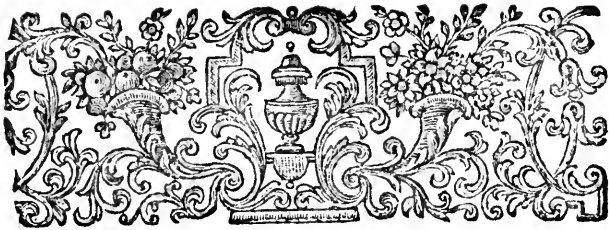
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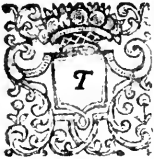
M D C C X L V I I.





T H E

P R E F A C E.

 HE request of several pious and judicious persons having determined us to give the Publick a new Edition of Mr. *Grove's* Works, printed in his life-time, the Reader may be assured, that this Collection in Four Volumes, Octavo, contains all that were published by that great Man himself, either with or without his Name. As it may be a reasonable entertainment to the curious, to trace such a Genius from its Opening to its full Strength and Maturity, we have prefixed to each Piece the Date of its first Publication. The same spirit will be found to animate the whole, a rational and exalted Piety, a Love of Virtue, Liberty, and

The P R E F A C E.

and of Mankind, a strong Sense of Immortality, and a constant Concern so to represent all the Doctrines, Duties and Motives of Religion, as may make them with efficacy to conspire in forming men to the Love of God, and an Imitation of him in true Goodness; that they might thus become meet to enjoy the divine and eternal blessedness, to which the Gospel and the Life of Christ direct them, and of which his Resurrection gives us so glorious an assurance.

These Works therefore will recommend themselves to the wise and good; as I earnestly recommend them, and the pious Reader in his perusal of them, to the blessing of God.

THO. AMORY.



T H E



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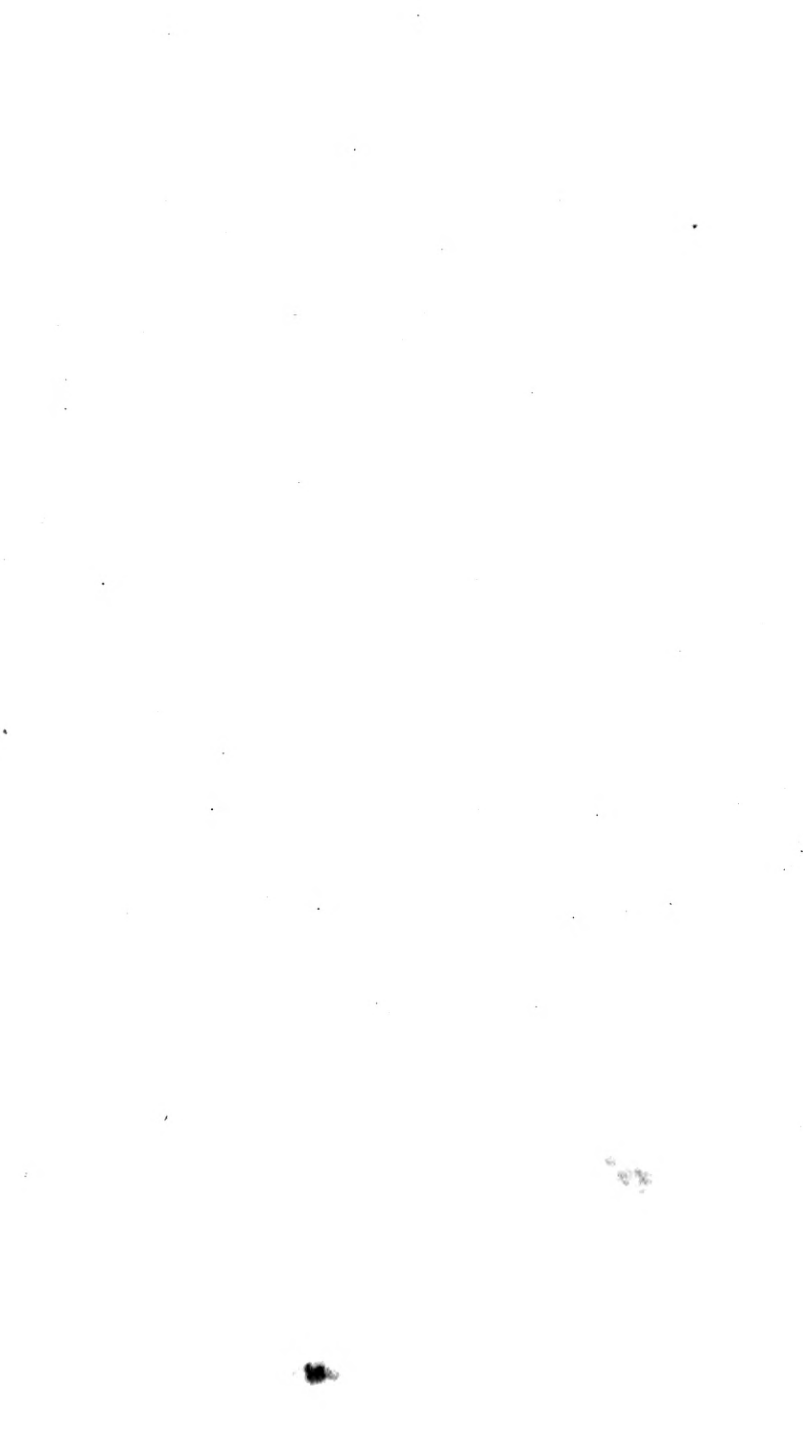
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T H E
P R E F A C E.



*W*HEN the following Sermon was first composed, little did the Author imagine to what place it was afterwards to be sent. Had he dream'd of the Press, he would have hardly put off his work to the end of the Week; for it was not till Saturday that he sat about it, unresolv'd till then whether he should preach upon the Subject. The Reader will be apt to think this a reason against publishing it; and would find no great difficulty to bring me of the same mind. But what shall I do? My Friends

would needs have it printed, by whom I suffered myself to be overcome; the less unwillingly, because if the composition was hasty, I considered the more moderate would be my reader's expectation.

To those that shall further demand why the Sermon was preached, let me answer, it was in defence of a despised forsaken sort of People, (amongst whom, notwithstanding, I think it my Duty to bless God I was born and educated) as well as of the Apostle Paul, whom I was a little moved to see so barbarously misrepresented.

This I will acknowledge, that if we vindicated ourselves as often as we are assaulted from the Pulpit, we might be justly esteemed to have forgot the true end of preaching, which is not to persuade men to be followers of us, but of Christ. But at a time when the common cry is against us, and many persons, full of hopes to see us more thoroughly mortified, look upon what is already done in our prejudice, as nothing, we must be pardoned if we cannot sit down wholly silent and unconcerned.

A word or two with the Reverend Mr. Potter, and I have done. Why, I beseech you, were the Occasional Conformists baled in? I thought we should have heard no more from you on that head; that your fraternity, though never accused of an excess of good nature, would

would at least have been pacified by the late Act against them. But it is plain, I did not know you. Forgive me this injury. We will suppose the Occasionalists to be even as bad as they have been painted out to the world, hath not the Government chastised them? And should not that satisfy? In more criminal cases we see those very persons that are most intent to have justice done on a malefactor, are yet so generous as to pity him when that comes to take place. But shall I be free? Why then, between you and me, I would fain have your assistance in one thing. You admit to your Communion men that are manifestly of no church, unless you will say they are of the Synagogue of Satan, and who, every body is sensible, can have no other motive in receiving, but to qualify them for a Place: this you can do, and be very quiet, as if all were well; but for Dissenters, tho' sober men and good christians, and tho' it was their professed principle, before the Test was imposed, to shew the good temper they were in towards the Church of England by occasionally communicating with her, for these to mix in your solemnities is reckoned unpardonable. Let me into the true reason of this different proceeding, and you oblige me unexpressibly. You do not think sure, it was a fault in the Dissenters to have so much charity for your church: if you thought this their error, and were resolved to convince

them of it, I own no methods could be more likely to do it than those that have been lately taken. Let me intreat you to do me one favour more, and frankly tell me what Logic you use, when from Occasional Communion you argue to Constant? Good Sir, did you never pay a friendly visit to certain folks, with whom nevertheless you would not care to pass your life? The application is easy.

That you may not think it much to gratify me in this, I shall by way of encouragement tell you something for your information, and that is, that our Academies are not those dangerous places which you would have people believe them to be. The common charge, is our poisoning the minds of Youth with Ill Principles. That we corrupt their Manners is not pretended; for tho' we are no better than we should be, yet I believe the world is agreed, we need not shun a comparison with our neighbours. And in truth, there is as little foundation for the charge of ill Principles. By Ill Principles, I presume, cannot be meant the Errors of Deists, Socinians, Papists, &c. We are content the matter should be tried by a poll; and if, taking your own Articles for the rule of decision, the number of the Orthodox be greater amongst you, than in proportion among us, condemn us without mercy.

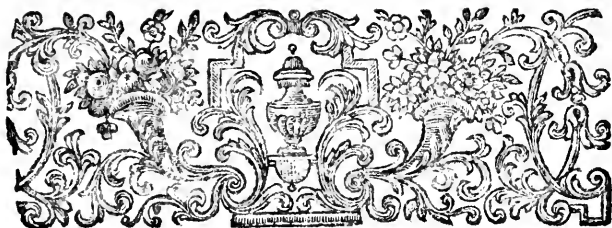
As for Principles destructive of the Monarchy or Church, we will be bold to say, that
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Her Majesty hath not more Loyal Subjects, nor the Church any that are more candid and charitable in their Dissent from her, than those that have had their Education with Us; and we should not think we had any reason to complain, if no more pains were taken at the Universities to prejudice your Youth against us, by unkind, not to say unfair, representations of us, and keeping them from an impartial view of the Controversy on both sides; than, Vice Versa, are used by us with our Youth to possess them with hard thoughts of you.

Having thus had the true state of the case laid before you, pray Sir, do us the justice to set your friends right in this matter; and tell them moreover, that besides the injustice of it, there is no policy in endeavouring to suppress the Nurseries of learning amongst us. For what can you propose by it? You will say, To prevent the propagating the Schism. But, with submission, this is a most fond expectation. For supposing the Dissenters incapacitated for giving their children a liberal education, yet doubtless they will breed them up in their own way; so that there will be still such a species of men as are called Dissenters, who if they cannot be supplied with Teachers from the Schools of the Prophets, will make them Priests of the lowest of the People, and whoever will shall be consecrated. Now we have been often told, that it is our ignorance, or want of enlarging our

minds by wider and more ingenuous notions of things, that renders us so averse to Conformity; by taking from us therefore the keys of knowledge, you do by your own confession put a greater bar in our way to the church; not to add, that this hard usage will be an additional means of souring our temper.





S E R M O N I.

The Duty of Peaceableness.

R O M. XII. 18.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.



It was lately observed by One that preached from this Text, that as the excellency of the Christian Religion appears in other respects, so particularly in this, that it consults the peace and quiet of the world, tending to take men off from their mutual jars and contentions, and unite them in one general bond of love and friendship.

This

This Observation was certainly well grounded, and very proper to the Text, as the Text was to the Occasion; and from these good beginnings I was ready to flatter myself, that the Preacher, who by his character and office ought to be a son of peace, would have given us a healing and pacifick discourse; instead of which, to be entertained with a violent invective against all that had not the happiness to be of his judgment, was, I confess, a great surprize to me, as I believe it was to his whole Auditory, excepting some few that knew the man and his way. Never, thought I then, did Text and Sermon agree worse; never was Observation made more suitable to what went before, or unsuitable to what followed; and if this Place of Scripture may be made to speak what is so directly contrary to its design, I shall no longer wonder, if, as the Preacher said, *Every Fanatick hath a Text for his Opinion.*

And now having acquainted you with the reason of my present choice of this subject, I shall try whether the words read have not another, and more favourable meaning than some men care to take notice of—And in order to this do lay down the following Doctrine.

That notwithstanding it be next to impossible to live peaceably with all men, yet we are obliged to do what in us lies towards it.

In

In the handling of which Proposition,
I shall,

- I. Explain the Duty here enjoined, *Living peaceably, as much as in us lieth, with all men.*
- II. Shew why we are not to expect the full accomplishment of our wishes and endeavours in this case; or whence it becomes a thing impossible to *live peaceably with all men.*
- III. That although perfect peace and quiet cannot be hoped for, yet we are bound to do our utmost for the obtaining it.

I. I shall explain the Duty here enjoined, and that as to its Nature, its Objects, and its Limitation.

1. The Duty recommended is *living peaceably*, an expression capable both of an *active* and a *passive* sense. In an *active* sense he lives peaceably, who does not molest others; in a *passive*, he that is unmolested by them. The first is always in our power, the second is not; the one therefore is the duty of all without exception, the other the peculiar happiness of a few.

1. A christian should be himself a man of a peaceable temper and behaviour; should be never known to offer an affront, or do
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an injury; never go about to hinder another in the enjoyment of his just rights and liberties; never break in upon the publick tranquility by a factious turbulent carriage; or upon the private peace of his neighbour by a quarrelsome contentious humour, but rather in word and action should be an example to the world of universal charity and good-will. The good man's first aim is at peace within, to have a quiet conscience and well governed passions; his next care is to establish and cultivate peace without, that the world may be in a condition, resembling the hazyon quiet of his breast, as in the quiet serenity of his breast there is a resemblance of heaven. The good man labours to keep all in peace round about him; allays heats, reconciles differences, and brings those to a right understanding of one another that before were at variance. All this he does as he hath opportunity and a call to it; or if he cannot obtain and preserve peace as he desires, at least he will do nothing on his part to violate it. But, ah, how few are the men of this character! The generality of the world appear little sollicitous for the peace of it. We should thank some if they would not make it their ambition and pleasure to throw it into confusion, being such enemies to peace that they will not suffer their neighbour to live quietly by them; not because he hath done them

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any wrong, but merely because he cannot be of the same opinion that they are. Nay, they have a spite against a man on the score of his peaceableness. You are all convinced, that this is not what is meant by *living peaceably*.

2. As we should be free from the imputation of infringing other people's peace, so should we put them under as little temptation as we can of disturbing ours; endeavouring by the most prudent management, to disarm their rage, assuage their malice, and prevail with them to lay aside their evil intentions against us. It is as much our interest as our duty to endeavour this; and if we do not succeed, at worst we have this to comfort us, that the guilt of the contention lieth all on their side, tho' we, perhaps, feel more of its pernicious effects than they. Having thus briefly explained the Nature of the Duty enjoined, I proceed to consider,

II. The Objects of it, *Live peaceably with all men.* That is,

1. Not only with men of our own Principles and Party, but with others; even Heathens are not excepted; but on the contrary were those whom the Apostle had principally his eye to, and towards whom he would have the professors of Christianity behave themselves

themselves in a most winning and affectionate manner. And is it not hard then that Christians should be excluded from the number of those with whom we live in peace; such as own the same *Lord*, the same *Faith*, the same *Baptism*; and this only for not falling in with us in things about which the Word of God hath left men at their liberty? Certainly that is not Christian Peaceableness, which is confined, like Popish Salvation to a Party. He cannot be said to *live peaceably with all men*, who lives peaceably with none but such as make his faith and practice the standard of theirs. You shall hear some proclaim themselves *lovers of peace and union*; but how? They love that others should unite with them in their sentiments: and shew me the man that does not. Men of such a narrow behaviour, who have a double face, one placid and smiling, which they turn towards their own company, the other fierce and cruel, with which they lower upon all besides; that have a christian tenderness for one another, (and this is more than some have) and hardly common humanity for the rest of the world, can never imagine they have acquitted themselves of their duty, and done all that is required of them in the Text; they can never think so, unless their zeal have shrunk up their understandings as it hath done their charity. By what names soever men are pleased to call this

Party-

Party-Strife, it is really no other, in most, than ill nature, and betrays a spiteful and savage temper of soul. I am bold to say this, because they that are most furious against their brethren of another way, if their hands be tied up that they cannot be troublesome to them as they would, fall out among themselves, discharging that ill humour upon one another, which they can find no vent for upon Dissenters. We may well complain of such proceedings, but God forbid we should imitate them, and so justify by our actions what in words we condemn.

2. We must live peaceably not only with those that live peaceably with us, but with such also as are otherwise inclined; that when they seek occasions of strife they may be disappointed in not finding it; and if they begin a contention may be left to carry it on too by themselves; or which is better, may drop it for want of some one to contend with. If they are rough and sour, so much the more sweetness and smoothness do you put on. Should a person be disposed, out of temper, to raise feuds and divisions, let him see by the contrary disposition in you, what an odious work he is about; or if through design he labours to provoke you, and draw you of your guard, convince him by the settled calmness of your behaviour that he is utterly mistaken. To continue peaceable, when thus urged to the contrary, is noble and
and

and praise-worthy; but if ye live peaceably with them alone that do the same with you, what thanks have ye? It would be well I profess for the world, if some people would go so far as this, if they would not be the first in the quarrel, yea, if they would not study how to stir up and cherish contention, but would let those be quiet, who desire nothing more than to be so; but even this would be such a denial to them, that, little as it is in its self, we must not expect that they will practice it, tho' if they did, they would have no pretence to make a merit of it; for where, I beseech you, is the mighty virtue of being civil and inoffensive to those that gives us not the least reason for the contrary? To those that by their example teach us after what manner to converse with them, and so order their whole conduct towards us, that if we fall out with them we must be perfectly void of excuse? As therefore we would act up to the height of the precept, let us shew ourselves peaceable with the angry, the froward, and the injurious.

3. We ought to live peaceably as well with those beneath us, as with those above us; as well with those whom it is in our power to vex and persecute, without danger of having the same treatment returned us, as with those whom we cannot meddle with but to our own hurt. Some indeed

deed are as unquiet in a low condition, as they are insolent in a higher one, and cannot fit still let what will be the consequence: but, generally speaking, men are most vexatious when they have got the higher ground, and are possessors of power to justify and bear them out. Power is a thing that few know how to manage as they ought; it seldom does the owner any good, or is made use of by him to do good with to others, but is turned into an instrument of mischief, and instead of being a guard upon the peace, proves a means of destroying it. And though it may be thought that Superiors are not concerned in the duty under consideration, yet the contrary is evident; for if it be the duty of Servants and Subjects to lead peaceable and quiet lives under their Governors, it is also the duty of Governors to administer no just ground of unquietness. If the Poor are not to do any thing that may incommode the Rich, in the enjoyment of their wealth, the Rich must not do any thing to grieve the Poor, and make them mutinous; remembering that Superiors are as truly guilty of the breach of this command, when they oppress, as Inferiors when they are heady and disobedient. So much for the Objects of the Duty enjoined, *living peaceably with all men.*

III. The Limitation inserted is remarkable, *as much as in you lieth*; intimating
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that there are some things which we may and ought to do for peace sake, and others that we may not.

1. There are some things which for peace sake we ought to do. As

1. To put up lesser injuries, *bearing with, and forbearing one another in love*; suitably to the advice in the verse following my Text, *Dearlly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath*; which words do very fitly stand in the next place to the command of *living peaceably with all men*, a forgiving temper being one of the most likely means to procure peace. *Give place unto wrath*; let the storm have its way, and it will quickly spend itself; whereas opposition will but make the current swell and grow outrageous. *Render not railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing; bless them that curse you, and do good to them that despitefully use you, and persecute you, for hereby you shall heap coals of fire on their head*; and convert enemies into friends.

2. Have more regard to the characters and tempers of persons, and in matters indifferent comply with them, *becoming all things to all men*, by which means it is much if you do not gain some. If men look for respect give it them, tho' more than their due, rather than have a noise made about it. If they be rigid and inflexible in their way,
it

it will be your wisdom ordinarily to yield to their humour ; considering that when two hard bodies meet they oft-times strike fire. Do not insist too much upon the natural liberty of your actions, but in order to preserve a good understanding between yourselves, and those you converse with, come a little into their measures, and do as they would have you, when neither *conscience* nor *convenience* require your refusal. Aim at a universal complacency and softness of manners, than which nothing more conciliates esteem and love.

3. Keep the tongue under due government. ^a *Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth ! The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity ; so is the tongue amongst our members, that it defileth the whole body, and seteth on fire the course of nature, and is itself set on fire of hell.* Upon this head who can forbear thinking of a sort of men that, by reason of the peculiar advantages they speak with, being capable of imploying this member most usefully, do but the more execution with it, mixing those passions in the worship of the true God, which can be acceptable only to false ones ; and instead of kindling in the hearts of their hearers the fire of charity, and the love of holiness, enflaming them with a cruel hatred against their brethren ? What saith the Apostle above quoted ?

C 2

Speaking

^a Jam. iii. 5, 6.

Speaking of the tongue, ^b *Therewith* (saith he) *blefs we God even the Father, and therewith curse we men who are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My Brethren, these things ought not so to be.* Good God, must the abilities of the Preacher, and the authority that accompanies his preaching, serve to no higher purposes? Were the gifts of eloquence and persuasion bestowed to do hurt withal? The truth is, if the matter were not too serious for it, it would make one smile to hear men exaggerating and pathetically bewailing those Divisions which they themselves are the cause of. All the outcry is against Dissenters, whilst it is not the Dissenter that is so troublesome to his neighbours, but a certain Phantom raised by spiritual enchantment, and called after his name; and that indeed is so monstrous, that poor people are to be excused if their blood rises against it. O how much more peace would there be in kingdoms, and churches, and neighbourhoods, did they who have the greatest mastery over the passions, take as much pains to moderate them, as they do to chafe and blow them up! But tho' I have mentioned only Ministers, yet none of you may think you are unconcerned in the duty of this particular. Indulge not yourselves in that wicked custom of *speaking evil of others.* It is

^a Jam. iii. 9, 10.

is much if by some way or other they do not hear of it again; and a greater wonder, if, when they hear of it, and are able to revenge themselves, they suffer you to remain in peace, who would not let their good name to do so. And when you have a call to speak ungrateful things to them, let the manner be as grateful as you can contrive it; let your admonitions be accompanied with modesty, and your reproofs with mildness; for by this method you will turn off their anger from you to themselves, and even force them to love the hand which wounds but to heal.

4. ^c *Study to do your own business*, for that is the way to be *quiet*; but ^d *busy-bodies in other mens matters must expect to suffer* for it. Mind the duties of your proper station, and leave others to manage their own affairs as they see fit. Inquisitiveness is a troublesome quality. Instead of thrusting your fickle into your neighbour's corn, strive to cultivate and improve yourselves in things commendable; for *who will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* Move silently along in your own sphere, shedding your kind influences upon all within your reach, but not trespassing upon their bounds. These are means which we may and ought to use for peace sake.

C 3

II. There

^c 1 Theff. iv. 11.

^d 1 Pet. iv. 11.

II. There are other things which we may not do, and for the neglect of which we cannot be justly charged as breakers of the peace.

I. To keep fair with a person we may not flatter his vices, much less copy them. There are those so unreasonable that they will not give quarter upon easier terms; but if this be their mind, that they will not be friends with us, unless they will be friends to their corruptions, even let them hate us. We dare not purchase peace with men by methods that would destroy our peace with God. Possibly the unlikeness of our manners to theirs may be a real trouble to them, and they may take occasion to quarrel with us for our adherence to the principles of virtue and religion, calling it stubbornness and obstinacy; but we are not to think this any way strange, or to be in any degree influenced by it. *Elijah* was in this sense unpeaceable; he could not wink at the idolatries of *Ahab*, nor fall in with the reigning corruptions, but was unfashionably good; which made the King, when he met him once, ask, *Art thou he that troubleth Israel?* No, saith the Prophet, *I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord.* The highest quality will not give a sanction to vice, tho' vice will take away much

much of the respect and deference that should wait on that. Sin is hateful where-ever it be found; neither should we seek to put false colours on it to make it look amiable, or rather to render ourselves acceptable and beloved for doing it. Take *Elibu* for an ensample in this case; ^f *Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person; neither let me give flattering titles to man; for I know not to give flattering titles, in so doing my Maker would soon take me away.*

2. We may not sacrifice truth to peace, as they would have us do, who, right or wrong, expect we should submit to their impositions. We beg leave to examine and try all matters in dispute, by the unerring rule of Scripture; and if leave be not given us, we think we can justifiably take it; and that in case, after a fair inquiry, we are not satisfied to comply with the things imposed, we are at liberty to reject them; this is all the liberty we claim; and this, we are persuaded, God and nature meant we should enjoy. We know what the Scripture saith, that *all that is not of faith is sin*; and we know that reason tells us the same thing; for when all is done, it is the light of every man's own mind, and not another's, that must guide him in religious affairs. In other matters, we sometimes pay so much regard to another's judgment, as to act by

^f Job xxxii. 21, 22.

it in opposition to our own, because we run no great hazard in it; but where the salvation of our souls is concerned, and he acts surest who doth his best, we must exercise our utmost caution, and make choice of those means that are most to our edification; and which they are, it is reasonable to suppose, every one is best able to judge for himself. The *Peace of the Church* is, I own, a very plausible topick; it is what honest men pray for and pursue, and designing men, under a pretence of more than ordinary zeal for it, make a handle of the most unchristian animosities, persecuting men in this world, and damning them in the next, because they will not do all which they have made necessary to procure it. Though after all, it is very much to be questioned, whether this method, if it were tried, would answer; for they in whom passion is so strong, and reason so weak, that they cannot bear to have others differ from them, even tho' they should be brought to agree, would hardly want something or other still to put them out of temper. Where the fault is in nature, it is not applying external emollients will effect the cure; to prevent old sores from breaking out again that must be corrected. For my part I cannot conceive how unity of judgment and practice is necessary to unity of affection and harmony of life. We see that particular Corporations, besides the Laws
of

of the Realm by which they are governed in common with others, have certain By-Laws amongst themselves; neither is this judged inconsistent with the peace of the state.* And why should it be thought any more inconsistent with the peace of the Church, for particular Churches, retaining uniformity in the essential points of Religion, to vary in other things? In the primitive times this mutual forbearance was commonly practised, every particular Church or Congregation challenging and enjoying an inherent power of managing its own affairs. †

Let this conclude the First thing proposed, or the explication of this Duty, as to its Nature, Objects, and Limitation.

II. I am next to shew you, Why we cannot expect the full accomplishment of our wishes and endeavours in this case; or whence it becomes a thing impossible to *live peaceably with all men.*

I shall

* Enquiry into the constitution, &c. of the Primitive Church.

† Neither is this contradicted by the convening of Synods, seeing the Decrees of such Assemblies (if obligatory) bound only those Churches whose Representatives were present at them; and these not by any force they had of their own, but by virtue of the agreement they (the Churches) had entered into of being determined by them.

I shall be the shorter upon this head, because the reason of it is so apparent; for when inquiry is made into the causes of hatred and variance, every one perceives that the lusts and passions of men are in fault, because every one must be sensible by the confusion they create in his own bosom, that they are the worst enemies to peace. ² *Whence come wars and fightings amongst you? Come they not hence, even from your lusts that war in your members?* So that as long as pride, and covetousness, and revenge, and such-like evil dispositions are in the world, and these there will be as long as there are men in it, like so many boisterous winds, they will render it a scene of distraction, driving men like vessels on a tempestuous sea one upon another. Pride is never satisfied without more submission than it will ever meet with; nor Covetousness without more wealth than can be supposed to fall to its share; nor Revenge without perpetual retaliations; and being thus insatiable they will find men work enough to gratify them, which cannot be attempted without ruining things into disorder. But besides these general passions, there is a particular ill turn of mind, with which some have the unhappiness to be born, which will neither afford any rest to themselves, nor suffer any to be at rest that are about them. Too many in the world are of *Nabal's*

² Jam. iv. 1.

bal's character, of whom his servants gave this account, that he was such ^h *a son of Belial that a man could not speak to him.* We ought in charity to make allowances for this temper, and if we cannot manage it as well as we would, do as well with it as we can.

Ignorance too is many times the occasion of unpeaceableness. The greatest storms happen usually in the night. Ignorance is the parent of false zeal, and the more ignorant zeal is, the more immoderate. Its true ignorance left to itself would be less hurtful; but alas, though harmless itself, it fits men for tools to serve the corrupt designs of contriving heads, and renders them as terrible, being played by others, as else they would be innocent. Schism, Rebellion, and a few more such terms of art, thrown amongst the ignorant multitude, have produced wonderful effects. It is found likewise that ignorance runs men into imprudences, which may be well enough meant by them, but draw after them very sad consequences.

These are reasons why no one must look for perfect peace in this world.

But the sincere followers of Christ Jesus have more reason than others to expect trouble. *They are not of the world, therefore the world hateth them.* The exemplariness of
their

^h 1 Sam. xxv. 17.

their lives reproves the wickedness of others, and wakes conscience in them, so that they are strangers to rest, which makes them by way of revenge procure all the trouble they can, to those who are the occasion of their inward uneasiness. Finally, the Devil is not yet chained up, he is permitted to raise storms not in the air only, but in the world and in the church, and having great wrath against good men breathes the same into his agents, continually urging them on to mischief, and assisting them in the contriving and effecting it.

III. Although perfect peace is not to be hoped for, yet are we bound to do our utmost for the obtaining it. Be persuaded *as much as lieth in you, to live peaceably with all men.*

I. In conformity to the Gospel, which by its precepts enjoins it, by its examples recommends it, by its rewards encourages it, and by its principles tends to beget and maintain peace in the hearts, and the societies of men. An unpeaceable christian is a perfect contradiction; his faith is his condemnation, for he professes to believe in God, who is stiled *the God of Peace*; in Jesus Christ, who is *the Prince of Peace*, died to make Peace, and is ever mediating it; and in the Holy Spirit, amongst whose
fruits

fruits are *peace, long-suffering, and gentleness.*

2. For the credit of your profession. One of the greatest and most early prejudices, which the heathen world entertained against Christianity, was a false notion got amongst them, that the Christians were an unpeaceable sort of men. * This mistake arose from their confounding the Christians with the *Jews*, who, as *Suetonius* ignorantly writes, being headed by one Christ were continually raising tumults and seditions; by means of which gross mistake, the innocent came to share in the punishment of the guilty. You are not now to be informed, that the same charge hath been renewed against us, and like that against the first Christians, for want of distinguishing between us and some hot-headed enthusiasts, whom we as little countenance as they that are incessantly boasting of their loyalty; I will not give myself liberty to suppose, out of fear that the world would otherwise be ignorant of it. My Friends, Let us continue to prove this charge unjust, in spite of all the arts that our enemies put in practice to ruffle and ensnare us. If called upon at any time let us be ready to give a reason of our Dissent, *with meekness, having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of us, as*
of

* In Vita Claudii.

30 *The Duty of Peaceableness.* VOL. I.
of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely
accuse our good conversation in Christ. Peace-
ableness with godliness and honesty (and
remember, they generally, if not always go
together) will prove the best support and
commendation to our cause; as on the other
hand, nothing can be a greater prejudice to
it than the contrary character.

3. If it were only for your own ease
and satisfaction, you should *study to be quiet*.
For though as the world now stands, *the*
doing all that in you lies, were it much
more than it is, will not be sufficient for
the attainment of the end you aim at, yet
questionless you will have more peace than
another shall, who doth what in him lies,
to live unpeaceably with all men. Let the
worst come, having done your duty, you are
sure of inward complacency, that if men
will not suffer you to live peaceably, yet
conscience will; and you will have the sa-
tisfaction to know that whatever oppositions
you meet with, they are not the effects of
your own impatience and folly, but trials
designed by Providence to exercise your vir-
tue, and prepare you for your crown.





The Grounds of ANNIVERSARY-
DAYS, *both Festivals and Fasts,*

CONSIDERED IN A

S E R M O N,

P R E A C H E D

N O V E M B E R 5, 1717.





S E R M O N II.

The Grounds of Anniversary Days.

EXOD. XII. 14.

And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and you shall keep it a feast to the Lord, throughout your generations; you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.

THE deliverance of the children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*, not only as it was a type of the redemption of mankind by *Jesus Christ*, but in itself considered, is extremely remarkable, and to be reckoned among the most illustrious periods in time, events in history, and works of Providence; wherein the true God triumphs over the false gods of the heathen, executes judgment against their idols, and confounds all their worshipers; the divine power is gloriously

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displayed in a variety of extraordinary and miraculous operations, the divine justice signified upon a hardened tyrant and the professed enemies of his people; the truth and faithfulness of God cleared in the exact accomplishment of his promises; and, finally, his tender and watchful care of the church, manifested in appearing so seasonably and so wonderfully for those to whom it was at that time confined. A train of miracles prepared the way to this deliverance, and a succession of them followed it. Men may obstinately, and for a long while together, fight against God, and harden themselves under his judgment; and God, to shew the power of his patience, may indure with much long-suffering those vessels of wrath before he gives the decisive blow, but will at last overcome. The impious *Pharaoh* will be an example of this to all ages. Against nine plagues did this wretch bid defiance; so difficult is the conquest of an obdurate heart: the tenth and last makes him submit, for all the first-born in *Egypt* die in one night; the Lord putting a difference in this, as he had done in the former plagues, between the *Israelites* and the *Egyptians*. A great and sore cry is every where heard, and in this fright both *Pharaoh* and his subjects are urgent for the departure of those, who till then, could not obtain a permission to go, concluding themselves

selves to be all but dead men. On the day preceeding their departure, (as the night before he suffered our Lord instituted the great gospel feast of the Supper) the Pass-over is appointed, as a standing memorial of God's passing over the houses of the *Israelites*, from whence the Festival takes its name, and by strength of hand bringing them out of the house of bondage. *And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and you shall keep it a feast unto the Lord, throughout your generations; you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.* The Observation which, from these words, I shall make the ground of the following discourse is this.

God justly expects that the great and signal deliverances which, in his Providence he brings about for his people, should be had in everlasting remembrance.

In the handling of which doctrine I propose these several things.

- I. To inquire into the reasons of it; or why God would have these glorious works of his Providence to be remembered.
- II. To prove it highly agreeable to Reason, and not contrary to the Word of God, for Publick Days to be set apart by authority for memorials of such deliverances; and in imitation of that

the text refers to, to be made Anniversary and Perpetual.

III. To consider the difference which, in this respect, there is between Festivals and Fasts; and the foundations of this difference.

And then lastly, to bring down all to the memorable occasion of this day.

I. I shall inquire into the reasons of the point; or why it is God expects that great and signal deliverances, those glorious works of his Providence, should be ever remembered. I shall only name some of the principal reasons.

I. These works belong to the history of Providence, which God would have to be known and read of all men. They are indeed some of his chief beauties, its master-strokes, which most evidently discover the finger of God. The book of Providence is the noblest, the largest, and most instructive in the world, comprehending in it whatsoever is true and observeable in all other histories: for all these human compositions, with what view soever they were drawn up by several authors, as far forth as they pursue the truth, are nothing but a history of God's dealings with mankind from age to age; and when the whole volume shall be laid open to us, when we shall see the whole thread

thread of events from beginning to end, and shall read it all by the clear light of the upper world, we shall find every page to be full of meaning, and cry out, with astonishment, O the depth of the wisdom, and knowledge of God! This will be the happiness of all the saints, at the closing up of the scene, among whom we shall have a place, if we follow the faith of those gone before us. In the mean while, let us gather up what we can (for the very fragments here are precious) and hide it deep in our memories, whether it be what hath fallen under our own observation or hath been delivered down to us from our forefathers, who have told us the things God did in their days; by which means we shall be the better able to understand the conduct of Providence, and to unfold its difficulties, comparing the experiences of past ages with the events of the present time.

^a Inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers; for we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow. Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart? We are not placed high enough, neither do we live long enough to be competent judges of Providence, and should therefore take in all the helps we can get, running back to times far

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gone,

^a Job viii. 8, 9, 10.

gone, those especially which we have recorded in sacred scripture, and from all together framing the best conceptions of the Perfections and Providence of God that we are able. We find it complained of more than once,^b that men regarded not the work of the Lord, nor considered the operation of his hands, and to this is attributed the misery and destruction brought upon them. And next to a stupid regardlessness of the works of God, is lightly forgetting them. *c They forgot his works and his wonders that he shewed them.* It is an high affront and indignity offered to the great God, as if his management of the affairs of the world was not worth our notice, when we attend not to the steps of his Providence, nor often ask, what hath God wrought?

11. The memory of God's works of fame is of excellent use for the preservation of religion in the world, both in its belief, and practice.

1. Religion, as it respects the faith of a supreme Being, his government of the world, and regard to the different actions of men, of which he approves some and punishes others, is hereby very much supported. Religion and irreligion, tho' direct contraries, may be yet said to be both of them natural to mankind. The great principles of religion having been stamped on the soul by the
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^b Psal. xxviii. 5. Isai. v. 12, 13. · ^c Psal. lxxviii. 11.

the hand of God in its first creation, can never be intirely razed out. But then, thro' the darkness of human understanding, and great corruption of the heart, there is since the apostacy a general inclination in men to slide into infidelity. And were it not for those less common appearances of God's Providence in the several ages and nations of the world, by which he awakens mankind to consider that there is one who rules among them, tho' invisible, it is to be feared these seeds of religion would in length of time be buried, and lie dead and useles in the mind. At certain times therefore God breaks forth in extraordinary works of Providence, and is known by the glory that surrounds him. And then men can say, ^d *Verily there is a reward for the righteous, verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.* And to the same sense may be applied that of the wise man, ^e *I know that whatsoever God doth it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it; and God does it that men should fear before him.*

2. Religion, as it regards practice, is equally indebted to the memory of God's providential works. For whom men believe and fear, they will have some care to please in their behaviour; so that the fear inspired by the awful manifestations of the divine justice and power, contributes not a little

^d Psal. lviii. 11.^e Eccles. iii. 14.

to the restraint of that torrent of violence and wickedness which would otherwise go nigh to overflow the world. And besides this, there is somewhat of gratitude left in human nature (tho' God knows it is but little) which leads us to think ourselves under obligation to that God, who watches over our lives and liberties, and by his Providence does, at times, so visible interpose to save them. For which reason, the Ten Commandments are ushered in with this preface, *† I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other Gods before me, &c.* There is a secret conviction in every one's breast, that obedience is due for protection, and service for deliverance. Is it not reasonable that the same God who guards me, should rule me? And he who redeems me from slavery, should have my chearful, voluntary service? It is upon this ground that the remembrance of God's works, and the observation of his commands are joined together by the Psalmist. *‡ He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children that should be born; who should arise and declare them to their*

† Exod. xx. 2.

‡ Psal. lxxviii. 5, &c.

their children; that they might not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

III. God expects the great works of his Providence should be had in perpetual remembrance, because they carry in them the accomplishment of his promises. ^h *With his hand he fulfils that which he spake by his mouth.* And therefore *Joshua* is bold to appeal to the people of *Israel* in a meeting of all their tribes, ⁱ *Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things, which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass, and not one thing hath failed you.* God hath promised to build his church on a rock,—that he will be with it to the end of the world,—and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;—that he will be nigh to them who call upon him,—and none who put their trust in him shall be desolate. Now when we see the people of God surrounded with enemies, and near to being swallowed up, and God eminently appears in answer to their prayers, snatching them as a prey out of the mouth of the lion; when we see the true religion involved in the most threatening dangers, and ready at once to be oppressed and extinguished, and by a hand from heaven, rescued from the destruction plotted against it, must we not praise the Lord for his truth, and say, *That he remembereth*

^h 2 Chron. vi. 4.

ⁱ Jos. xxiii. 14.

bereth his covenant for ever? This is the improvement the pious Psalmist makes of God's wonderful works. ^k *The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honourable and glorious, and his righteousness endureth for ever.—He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered.—He will ever be mindful of his covenant.—The works of his hand are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure, they stand fast for ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.* God may seem slack concerning his promise, as men count slackness, but he never forgets it; the successive ages of the world supplying manifest confirmation of it, and comments upon it.

iv. The examples recorded in history of God's providential care over the church are of great use for the support of such as fear him at all times. ^l *The generation to come shall know them, even the children which shall be born, who shall arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God;* as we have it in the Psalm I had occasion to quote once before. Certainly that Providence may safely be relied on which hath so often proved itself to the conviction of the most blinded and prejudiced part of mankind. ^m *He that hath delivered, and doth deliver, can still deliver.* Difficulties only serve to set off the glory of God's works, and

^k Pſal. cxi. 2, &c. ^l lxxviii. 6, 7. ^m 2 Cor. i. 10.

and to distinguish them from all others. If we may speak after the manner of men, God loves to appear in times of distress, and in cases that despair of any other help than his. *Nodus vindice dignus.* The difficulty requires and demonstrates an almighty succour. Think of the wonders that former ages have seen; think on those to which you, yourselves, have been eye-witnesses; after this can you distrust, or fear or faint? The same power, the same omniscience, the same goodness, are still in being, and continue without decay. *They that know thy name, that is, the same thou hast gotten in the earth by thy mighty works, and particularly the great things thou hast wrought for thy church, will put their trust in thee; for thou Lord hast not forsaken them that seek thee.* And in another place, *“We have heard with our ears, O God; our Fathers have told us what work thou didst in their days, in times of old. ° In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever.* After the same manner *Solomon* concludes his prayer to the God of *Israel*, at the dedication of the temple, making use of this encourageing plea, that he was the God that had brought their fathers out of *Egypt*. And when he afterwards comes to bless the congregation, he gratefully acknowledges that there had not failed one word of all that God had promised by *Moses* his servant; and

‡ Psal. ix. 10.

‡ xliv. 1, &c.

and then adds this benedictory wish, ^p *The Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers.* By keeping the works of God in remembrance, as he hath the glory of them, so we have the benefit and advantage of drawing from them arguments of continual trust and dependence.

II. I shall now prove it to be highly agreeable to Reason, and not contrary to the Word of God, for Publick Days to be set apart by authority for memorials of signal deliverances; and in imitation of that which the Text refers to, to be made Anniversary and Perpetual. And here, I would only insist upon these two considerations.

I. This is the most probable, not to say the only way of perpetuating the general knowledge and remembrance of such deliverances. For when they are suffered to mix with the common events of time, and have no other conveyance but history, if the memory of them does not quite wear out, yet it is but a few to whom the knowledge of them can be supposed to come, because but few, in comparison, trouble themselves to look into the account of antient times. The present scene, and their own private affairs take up the attention and thoughts of the greater part of mankind, who are so far from an inquisitive search after old events,

events, that they are many times ignorant of the occurrences of the age they live in. Such days therefore are with good reason set up as *Pillars of Remembrance*, and in the revolution of the year are of use to revive and establish the memory of God's marvellous works. For when it shall be asked, as it was supposed the children would do concerning the celebration of the Passover,—What is this? On what account came this day to be annually observed? To which their answer was to be, ^a *By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage*; so we may say, that God hath done great things for us, particularly such and such, to preserve which admirable events from oblivion, and that what God hath wrought in one age, might be known and extolled by all, this day was settled. The end of such feasts is therefore said to be for a *Memorial* or *Monument*, which intimates that unless some such method was taken, the knowledge of the most memorable works of Providence, in the current of time would sink, and be quite lost as to a great part of the world.

2. By the institution of such days the magistrate gives glory to God, confessing deliverance and safety to come from the same hand which at first conferred on him his power and authority. For as the powers
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^a Exod. xiii. 14.

that be are ordained of God, so God alone giveth salvation to kings. Such Festivals are a publick acknowledgement of a divine overruling Providence, a solemn declaration of it to the whole world, and a standing attestation or witness to this great truth, transmitted down from generation to generation. For national benefits God ought to have national honour and devotion; and it is very much for the credit of religion, and tends to keep alive the publick sense of it when a whole people join in commorating a deliverance to which they owe their preservation from the most terrible evils, and the quiet enjoyment of their rights, liberties, laws, religion, and all they hold dear and valuable in the world. And as from these two considerations it appears to be highly agreeable to Reason, for days of memorial to be fixed by a proper authority, so there is nothing from the Word of God to be objected against this practice: on the contrary, we find God himself as king and lawgiver of the *Jewish* nation appointed a Yearly Day of Joy and Thanksgiving for their deliverance out of slavery. And why earthly magistrates may not do, on parallel occasions, what was done under that theocracy, when the scripture hath no where laid in the least caution against it, I cannot conceive any good reason. But then, as I said, it must be upon parallel occasions, and with such limitations as the na-

nature of the thing makes necessary. It ought to be for national deliverances that such Anniversary Days are appointed—for deliverances that are important and uncommon,—and lastly, they ought not to be multiplied.

I. The deliverance should be national to justify the separation of a day from the rest of the year in memory of it. Should a nation be unhappily divided into parties, and one of them, chiefly as a party, prevail over the other, this advantage, which it might be apt to construe as a declaration of Providence in its behalf, would not warrant the adding a new holiday to the calendar; under the cover of which they might insult all whose opinions are not exactly conformable to theirs, and foment a spirit of strife and contention, the most fatal thing that can be to the peace and welfare of a kingdom. Whether, for some of those reasons, *a certain day*, very much in request among some people, might not conveniently be laid aside, I shall leave those to judge whom it most concerns. The restriction manifestly cuts off a great many other days, as those dedicated to the honour of particular saints, which, perhaps, were better restored to the romish church, having not the least foundation in scripture examples, nor relation to us as a nation. To which shall I add, that they are more suitably matched with the doctrine of that church

concerning the merit of saints, and her superstitious custom of invoking them; whereas, *in a reformed church*, they are at best but like an old piece upon a new garment, or if you will, like a new upon an old, which for certain is no part of its beauty? Likewise, all such days as are kept in memory of the birth of Christ, his death, and resurrection, the descent of the Holy Ghost, &c. for all which, if the Lord's Day, in its weekly return, was not a sufficient memorial God himself, no doubt, would have sanctified other days as he hath done that; the not doing of which is a clear intimation of his will in this case. For the memory of mercies which regard not one nation more than another, but all mankind alike, and are of a nature purely spiritual, God hath taken care to provide as far as he saw fitting; and for men to intermeddle in this matter with their suppliments is a tacit accusation of the divine institutions as defective, and insufficient to answer their end.

2. Such Anniversary Thanksgivings ought not to be appointed but for important and uncommon deliverances. Such was the coming of the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*, where the whole church of God, at that time, had groaned under a long and miserable servitude. Such was the turn upon the dreadful massacre intended against the people of
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the *Jews* by *Haman*, which gave rise to the Feast of *Purim*,^r ordain'd to be kept, for the space of two days yearly, throughout all their generations. And little less remarkable were the Deliverances of this Day—the saving a Nation from ruin, preventing that which is worse than death itself, to an ingenuous mind (every one will guess that I mean Slavery) or restoring that liberty without which life itself is not valuable—this certainly challenges a never-dying remembrance, and is so unspeakable a mercy, that the reflection upon it is enough to warm the heart to sentiments of praise and gratitude as often as the Day comes round; even to times the most distant from that in which the Deliverance was wrought. *Civil Freedom* is our great happiness as we are men, and joined in society for the more safe and comfortable passing of this life; and *Freedom of Religion* is our privilege as we are christians, and designed for an after state; and both of that price, that the Providence whereby they are secured ought never to be forgotten.

3. I beg leave to think this another necessary limitation, that such Days ought not to be multiplied. For as they are not needful, seeing on *one* such Day we may comprize in our thoughts and thanksgivings the mercies of many others, so I would further ask, whether the great number of them

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∴ *Esth.* ix, 26, &c.

would not have a tendency to render them less solemn, to corrupt the poor of the land by introducing idleness and excess, and by degrees, to make men less strict in the observation of the *Sabbath* itself. On all these accounts *Mens Days* ought to be very few, what name soever they pass under; and no unprejudiced person will think the Romish Church to be defended, where, (not to dispute the authority that hath given a sanction to such Days; not to observe that some of them carry the names of persons that never were in the world, or are damned spirits in hell, and are all of too particular a nature to be kept after so publick and solemn a manner) the multitude of them alone is sufficient objection against them; the poor labourer having a great part of that time devoured by them, which God hath allowed him for work: and as if the Year was not already enough crouded with such days, they are continually canonizing new saints, and may go on doing so to the end of the world, if they had but as many Days in the Year as they are furnished with pretended Saints, which as some have counted them, are in such number, that tho' there were as many Holidays as there are minutes in our Year, the Year would not afford a feast for each Saint. How far a certain Protestant Church from which we dissent is concerned in the

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consequence of this particular, let the impartial judge.

III. The last thing proposed is to consider the difference which in this respect there is between Festivals and Fasts, and the foundation of this difference. The appointment of Days of Thanksgiving to be Yearly observed in remembrance of very great and extensive Deliverances hath been shewn to be not only lawful, but under certain limitations highly useful; but now, on the contrary, for the observation of Annual Fasts in memory of *some sin committed*, it seems to have no countenance either from Scripture or Reason. The thing is utterly destitute of Scripture precedents. We have Feasts of divine institution, but no Fasts of this nature. Take notice that I say, none *divinely* appointed, perpetual, nor in memory of any one particular fact. It cannot be pretended, as the reason why no such Fasts are to be met with, that there was no occasion given for them, for only to mention some of the provocations in the wilderness, cited by the Apostle *Paul*¹ as examples for the admonition of those on whom the ends of the world were come; were not the people guilty of Idolatry in making and worshiping the Golden Calf, which, as it was the leading sin of that kind, so was one of the greatest too, all circumstances considered,

¹ 1 Cor. x, 7, &c.

that stands marked in sacred history? Did they not commit whoredom with the daughters of *Moab*, mingling in the sacrifices of their Gods? Did they not tempt God in the desert, and in the height of their mutiny talk of stoning those whom he had set over them for their conductors? These were not the sins of a *few* persons only, but of the *body* of the people; they were highly provoking to God, and punished by him in the most terrible manner, by the immediate destruction of great numbers, and the exclusion of all that generation, with the exception of two that were of a better spirit, from the Land of Promise. So that if ever sins called for a publick Yearly Fast these did; and, if ever such Fasts were of service, these were likely to have been so, as warnings against symbolizing with neighbouring nations in their idolatrous worship, intermarrying with them, and rebelling against the messengers of God; which were all of them sins extremely agreeable to the temper of that people; and yet God saw not fit to command Fasts on these occasions; which, I take it, affords a fair and conclusive argument against any such Days; for as much as *the foolishness of God*, to use the words of the Apostle, that which too often is so accounted, *is wiser than men*.

The general instruction to be drawn from hence is, that sins once repented of, are intirely forgiven;

forgiven; and in the scripture sense, *forgotten* too; that is, so far, as that God will not upbraid men with former miscarriages, which shall not once be mentioned unto them. And though to keep him humble, and possess him with a lively sense of pardoning mercy, it be very proper for the penitent to make a particular and frequent confession of some sins which he hath ground to believe are forgiven, yet in his confession to proceed always on the supposition of their being unpardoned; and to alarm, terrify and afflict himself, after the same manner as when they were first committed, cannot be his duty: whereas mercies are of a more constant obligation, and ought accordingly to be consecrated to perpetuity, both to inspire us with gratitude, and to incourage future trust in the Providence of God. The debts contracted by sin may be all forgiven and crossed, but gratitude is a debt we should be always paying, because it will be always due.

But the chief foundation of the difference between Annual Feasts and Fasts is this, that the guilt of the same individual sin does not descend from one generation to another, as the influence of a mercy may do. The Jews, in a like case, are reproved for using this Proverb, *That the Fathers had eaten sower grapes, and the Childrens teeth were set on edge*; charging the calamities that befell them on

the score of their Progenitors; which was so far from being true, that let the Father have been never so vile and wicked, if he hath a Son that seeth his Father's sins which he hath done, and considers, and doth not the like, he shall not die for the iniquity of his Father, he shall surely live; it being a standing Rule of God's Proceedings in such cases, *the soul that sinneth, it shall die*; as you have the matter stated at large in the xviiith Chapter of *Ezekiel*. Indeed, if men act over their Father's sins, and receive not instruction from the dealings of Providence with those that lived in former ages, God may punish the same degree of corruption more severely in them than he did in their Forefathers, because of the incorrigibleness which they add to their other sins, and a stupid disregard of providential warnings: but still, speaking properly, the guilt of sin is incommunicable, and dies with the guilty persons; so as that it can never be the duty of their Successors to repent of their sins, as of their own; to accuse themselves in the sight of God of things done before they were born, or to take a load upon their shoulders which does not belong to them; when, God knows, they have sins enough of their own to mourn for, without adopting the sins of past generations to make up the number. The case is so very different in respect of mercies, that one and the same deliverance
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may be a mercy not to one age only, but to all the generations to follow to the end of the world; herein like a stream which if not intercepted will flow on endlessly. Upon the whole then, there is a manifest difference between Yearly Festivals and Fasts in memory of particular Sins or Deliverances; the former have their foundation in Reason and Scripture, the latter not.

The *Day of Attonement* ^t was, I confess, a Perpetual Fast, on which the *Israelites* were cammanded to afflict their Souls; but then no particular Sin is mentioned for which Expiation was to be made more than for any other, and which in the return of that season was to be confessed and bewailed by all Posterity. It was plainly no other than an Annual Lustration for the cleansing the children of *Israel* once a Year from all their sins by a common sacrifice. I am not afraid to take notice also, that we read of the ^u *Fast of the fourth Month, of the fifth, of the seventh, and of the tenth*; in all four Fasts in the Year; but in reply to this, I have two or three observations to make, which, if I am not deceived, will shew those instances are nothing to the present purpose.

1. It doth not appear that these Fasts were instituted, or so much as approved by God; the contrary to which is more proba-

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^t Lev. xxiii. 27. ^u Zech. viii. 19.

ble from the question that is asked; *When ye fasted, and mourned in the fifth and seventh month* (and the same may be applied to the other two) *even these seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* By which interpreters agree to be in part meant (and I conceive principally,) that it was not in obedience to any injunction of God, but of their own heads that they had kept these Days. And that which strengthens this meaning is, that in the 7th verse, they are bid to hear the words, *which the Lord had cried by the former Prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited, and in prosperity; i. e. to observe the commandments of God inculcated upon them by the former Prophets, in doing whereof they would most infallibly secure his favour, and need not be solicitous about Days of human invention.*

2. Of these Fasts one was in memory of the siege of *Jerusalem* by * *Nebuchadnezzar*, another of the taking of the City, another of the destruction of the Temple, and the last (as to appointment, not in the order of the months) of the murder of *Gedaliah*, whom the King of *Babylon* had made governour of the land, with the poor remainders of the *Jews* that repaired to him, which seemed to give the finishing stroke to their miseries. So that three of these Fasts could be only designed

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* Zech. vii. 5. * 2 Kings xxv. 1. Jer. xlix. 4.
2 Kings xxv. 9. Jer. xli. 1, 2.

to bewail their calamities, and the general corruption which occasioned them, not any single crimes committed upon these Days. And as for the murder of *Gedaliah*, they were so few concerned in it, that we cannot suppose the end of setting a-part a Day was to humble themselves for it as their sin, but as it filled up the measure of their own punishment.

3. These Fasts were set on foot by the *Jews* in the time of their Captivity, while the City and Temple lay in Ruins, their Country desolate, and they themselves lived as exiles in a strange land, and were to last no longer than till their return to their former prosperous and happy state: after which it was promised, they should be to the house of *Yehudab* Joy and Gladness and Cheerful Feasts; the three Solemnities at which all the males were obliged to appear; and which had been suspended during the sad interval of the Captivity, swallowing up the remembrance of past sorrows. And how any parallel can be drawn between such Fasts, and one that shall be supposed not to commence but from the time that the judgments bewailed have their period, and is continued to the most flourishing times, and never observed with greater appearing zeal, than when the nation is at the height of its glory; I must leave those to tell us, who are good
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at reconciling contradictions; such as persecuting men out of pure charity and good nature, challenging that Infallibility in Fact, which they disclaim in Principle, and taking solemn and repeated Oaths to a government, which, not content barely to undermine, they openly traduce and oppose.

Lastly—Permit me now to bring down all to the memorable occasion of this Day. I have said too much on the former part of my discourse to be so large as I intended upon this. It is now more than a Hundred Years since that a Conspiracy was laid, the blackest and most barbarous that ever entered into the heart of man, to have been executed as upon this Day.—*Scelus incredibile & inauditum*,—a wickedness unheard of till then; incredible now, were it not vouched by the best authorities, and which, it is to be hoped, will have no parallel in all the annals of succeeding time.

This hellish Plot was discovered, *not without a miracle of Providence*, faith a Cardinal of their own; to signalize which, and to possess the People of these Lands with a due abhorrence of that Religion, which sanctifies such villanous methods of promoting it, this Day was by Authority recommend to the notice of future ages; and in keeping it none have joined with greater heartiness than the Non-Conformists have always done; and this at the same time that they have
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paid but little regard to some other Anniversary Days. And we are free to have our conduct in this matter examined, persuaded that to equal judges it will admit of an easy vindication.

Setting aside the Feasts and Fasts of the Church, concerning which I have given you some hints on the Second Head, there are *Three* which may be called *State Days*, viz. the 30th of *January*, the 29th of *May*, and the 5th of *November*. As to the first—Let the Fact of that Day deserve all the load that is laid upon it, and more, if that be possible, yet seeing it cannot be reckoned a *National Sin*, and the persons concerned have long since answered for it to God; seeing it hath served for little more than the *Shibboleth* of a party, the word of battel, a subject for young declaimers to whet their wits upon, and an opportunity (may I not say) to mock God, and to rail on their Fellow Subjects; on all these accounts, I say, it is our opinion, the nation would suffer nothing if that pretended Fast were no more heard of.

In bar to the 29th of *May* we have this to observe, that if it saw the Restoration of a King (whose personal character I meddle not with) it saw vice and profaness restored with him; it made way for the ejection of more than *Two Thousand Ministers*, who, in the confession of their adversaries, had no greater fault than their Nonconformity; and for a Popish Reign, which, had not

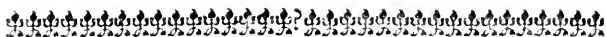
God in mercy stoped its career, would have driven over the neck of our liberties. We must be pardoned therefore if we judge such a Day as this not to merit the honour of being distinguished from other common Days. But now against the Fifth of *November* there lie no such exceptions. It is a Day to be much observed unto the Lord, for preventing a design, the success whereof, humanly speaking, would have bid fair to entail *Popery* upon us to all generations. And having mentioned that one word, I need add no more; for whoever wants a single term to express the greatest miseries that can befall the world, may seek long enough before he find one so full and significant as this *Popery*—that contradiction to common sense—that foe to reason—that reproach to religion—that sucker to the wealth of a nation—and destroyer of the rights of mankind—and open apostasy from the truth and simplicity of the Gospel—a notorious usurpation on the royalty of Christ—and the most cruel and bloody tyranny that was ever known, next to that of *Abaddon* himself, if it be proper to distinguish them. Christ shed his blood for mankind, he laid down his life for his sheep; how unlike his pretended Vicar, who is better resembled by the *Thief*, that cometh not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; that universal butcher, who, to see his empire, like an eastern monarch, sacrifices all that

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that can give him any disturbance. Christianity was planted, grew, and subsisted by the blood of its own Martyrs; Popery by Martyring all that would not renounce their Five Senses, and consent to the putting out of their eyes, that they might be the better able to follow their guides; this by Persecuting, that by suffering Persecution. From this absurd, this bloody, this dangerous religion, hath God often saved us; twice, as upon this Day, by the discovery of the Gunpowder Treason first, and since that by the landing of the Prince of *Orange*, afterwards King *William*—A name that will ever be precious to all who in Religion are Protestants, and in the State Lovers of Liberty and King *George*. Thus hath God made his wonderful works to be remembered by repeating them; and certainly we are very justifiable in having a peculiar value for that Day which God himself hath delighted to honour.







C O N S I D E R A T I O N S

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Time and Eternity,

Adapted to the

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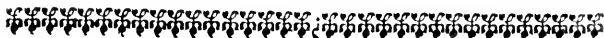
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S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D T O A

S O C I E T Y of Young Men,

1719.







S E R M O N III.

Considerations on Time and Eternity.

P S A L M XC. 4.

*For a thousand years in thy sight are
but as yesterday when it is past,
and as a watch in the night.*

THOUGH meditations on Time and Eternity can never be unseasonable to creatures that have so near a concern in both, as we mortals have who are passing through one into the other, yet there are certain occasions when reflections of this nature are peculiarly proper, some additional circumstance concurring to render them more useful and affecting. I take the present to be such a season. We have seen the funeral of one year more, and the beginning of another; this is a fit stage to rest our thoughts a little, to consider how much of our race

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is run, and of our work dispatched; to look back on the way that is past, and forward on that which remains; and to think how we may direct it so as to redeem the Time we have lost, and get safe to our journey's end.

The Title of this Psalm will instruct us in the Author of it, it is stiled *a Prayer of Moses the man of God*; occasioned, as it is thought, by God's displeasure against the *Israelites* for their provocations in the wilderness, and particularly their murmurings at the relation which the spies brought them of the good land; which sin of theirs so highly offended God, that notwithstanding, at the intercession of *Moses*, he pardoned their iniquity at that time, he yet swore *they should never enter into his rest*; but their carcases should fall in the wilderness, even all that were numbered of them, for twenty years old and upwards, who had murmured against him. This decree, reducing the lives of that generation to *seventy or eighty* years, which from that time was to be reckoned the ordinary standard of human life, leads this good man to meditate, on the one hand concerning the Eternity of God, and his watchful Providence over his Church in the successive ages of the world, *ver. 1, and 2*; and on the other, concerning man's Mortality, *ver. 3.* and both which in the text he joins in one and the same view, that he might
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the more illustrate them by a comparison. *For a thousand years in thy sight, &c.* He puts the case of *a thousand years*, because immediately after the fall the years of man's life did not come very much short of this number. The length of this term he compares to that of *yesterday*, as it appears to us, because *a day* bears but little proportion to *a thousand years*; but chiefly because Time seems to us much shorter when it is past, than when it is to come, almost as nothing. Another similitude, and which, perhaps expresses the same thing in a more lively manner, is that of *a watch in the night*. The antient *Jews* divided their night into three watches, (say some) consisting each of four hours; the evening watch, that which was strictly called the night watch, and the morning watch. According to others, into four watches containing three hours each. Now what are three or four hours spent in sleep? The Time when we begin to sleep, and the Time when we wake out of sleep are, as to us, immediately connected, and the space between, that is consumed in sleep, how considerable soever it may be in itself, in our estimation goes for nothing: such, and no more, are *a thousand years* in the the sight of God.

- I. The same proportion of Time as it is past, appears much shorter than when it is to come.
- II. In the sight of God the longest term of years is as nothing.

I. The same portion of Time as it is past appears much shorter than when it is to come. Time in itself is the same, but not in our view. To-morrow will consist of the very same number of hours and minutes as yesterday; and yet, because it is to-morrow, is seemingly of a much greater length; the eye of the mind contracts the one, while it enlarges the other. We have lived in the world twenty, or thirty years, some of us more, let me appeal to you, at the same time that I speak for myself, whether your life hath not been *like a tale that is told*? Time hath stolen away so insensibly, that we can hardly believe so much of it hath run out while the tale hath been telling. Whether you have not been like them that dream, scarce to be persuaded that you have dreamed so much Time? And whether one year to come makes not a greater appearance in your thoughts, I will not say than two or three years, but, than all the years that are past? What should cause this difference? I shall assign a few of the

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the plainest reasons, and then see the use this observation may be applied to.

1. We are more accustomed to look forward than backward; like travellers that are continually pressing on, and have a great deal of way before them, but regard not what they have gone over. We consider Time past as lost and perished, and so as nothing to us; we overlook it, and have no pleasure to fix our eye upon it. And this, perhaps, is one reason why the Time past appears so much shorter, and Time to come so much longer than it is; we care not to reflect on the former, we love not to employ our thoughts about it, we reckon it to be utterly destroyed and swallowed up in the gulph of Time; whereas, on the other hand, we trouble ourselves about Futurity more than we should do, it is perpetually running in our heads, we often forget the present to think of it, and are full of care and anxiety concerning it. The cause of our disregard for the past, why we think of it so seldom, and with so little application is, that we are enemies to the duties of self-examination and repentance. We know within ourselves that our past lives will not bear a scrutiny, that should we pry into them with any exactness, and carefully look over our actions, we should find abundant matter of humiliation and self-abasement; we therefore turn our backs

on the past, we banish it from our thoughts, and endeavour to annihilate it, that we may not be made uneasy with its remembrance. Was Time past the object of our frequent and serious meditation, together with the dealings of God's Providence with us therein, and our behaviour towards God, it would not appear so exceeding short; but as such a review would not afford us much pleasure, we studiously avoid it. Nor would our folly in this conduct be so inexcusable, if, by neglecting the consideration of the years we have prodigally wasted, we could wipe them out of God's Book, so as that he should never call us to account for them; but his eye is nevertheless open and attentive, because we shut ours^a.

2. We take our estimate of Time past and to come by different measures. Of Time past we judge by memory and by experience; of the Time to come by our imagination—by our designs and projects—by the discontent we are under with our present condition—and the hopes we entertain relating to the future.—Let me speak to these distinctly.

Of the Time past we take our account,

1. By our memory. The Time we have lived is thought longer or shorter, according
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^a Hof. viii. 2.

as we remember more or less about it. Now as it is but little that we can recollect of the train of our actions, when we set ourselves in earnest to it, and much less that we actually do so, for want of liking to such an employment, it is no wonder we have so lessening an idea of the years that are past. As we are active creatures we must be still doing somewhat or other, our nature will not suffer us to be perfectly idle; but tho' all our Time be filled up, yet, on the reflection, it is not much that our memory can recover of the wreck, the greater part by far escapes us; which proceeds either from hence, that our memories are weak and narrow, and not capable of lodging so many things; or, from our actions being so trifling and insignificant, and done with so little attention, as to make no impression on the memory; or rather from both. Time past resembles the sea with a vessel here and there floating upon it.

Apparent raræ nantes in gurgite vasto.

Looking back on our lives, an action or event more remarkable than common now and then occurs to our view; all besides is empty space, and because empty seems almost nothing. As the space between us and the stars, tho' immensely great, containing no solid objects by which to measure it, is

less in appearance than a few miles viewed from a rising ground with fields, rivers, houses, and other objects for the eye to fasten on, and to judge of the distance by.

2. We frame our notion of Time past by experience. We have found that to be little which, while it was to come, was esteemed a great deal; and being thus disappointed in our expectation of it, and experiencing it to be much less than we imagined it, we pass into the other extreme, and judge it to be much less than really it is. Experience undeceives us as to those great thoughts we had of the last year when we began it. Oh, what a length of Time was it then deemed! But now we have travelled it over, and that hath proved to be but a momentary duration which we fancied we should never see the end of, we are convinced of our having miscalculated. But how convinced? So as not to be guilty of the same error in relation to the years that are yet future? Alas, No; but we magnify these as much as we did the past; tho' as to the past we are sensible, and freely acknowledge, that we were mistaken. Is it not strange we should thus delude ourselves, and at once see our mistake and repeat it? By these two rules we estimate Time past, memory, and experience, which occasions its appearing so short to us. On the contrary,

Of the Time to come we take our account,

1. From our imagination. Imagination and memory are, as it were, two glasses, through which the soul beholds the several objects that come before it. The nature of memory is to lessen and contract the distance; it is the property of imagination to extend it; and at the same time that it increases the distance, it magnifies the object too; wherein it differs from all other prospectives, which, in proportion as they widen the distance of a thing lessen its magnitude. What a mighty space of Time do we fancy a few years to be? And how important is every thing which our imagination represents as happening to us in them? Indeed reason is a higher faculty than imagination and was bestowed on us by our wise and bountiful Creator to this very end and purpose, among many others, that we should not be imposed on by the false reports of fancy. But what shall we say? We love to be deceived, and will not hearken to Reason, lest it should rob us of those pleasures of imagination with which we foolishly amuse and entertain ourselves.

2. We estimate future Time by our designs and projects; and proportionably as we multiply these, we enlarge that. One man is intent on filling his bags, and making his
heap

heap bigger ; another contrives to pull down his barns and build greater in their room. There are such and such journies to be taken, such and such things to be done, such and such projects to be tried, such and such alterations to be made, all this will require a great deal of Time ; whereupon we grasp at as much Time as we shall need, we please ourselves with the thoughts of many years, and of the many things we will do every year.

— *Quid æternis minorem
Consiliis animum fatigas ?*

Saith the heathen poet, admirably well, *Why shouldest thou tire thy mind with meditating long designs, to which it is no way equal ?* It is great folly to do thus, but it is extremely natural. The brain is continually teeming with some careful thought, and the soul always busy in forging devices regarding the present life. And tho' it be no reason why we should think of Life as long because we have found out work for it, and cannot justify our conduct but on supposition of having a great deal of Time to spare, yet we make it a reason ; and that our Time may be commensurate to our cares and business we purposely mistake in measuring it.

3. We

3. We take our account of future Time from our discontent with our present condition. Time flows not now swifter, and now slower, but keeps on with one steady invariable motion. However tho' Time differs not, men differ in their notions about it; one thinks it runs, another that it creeps; for one it moves too fast, for the other too slow. The foundation of this difference is to be sought for in the different tempers and postures of their minds. He that is uneasy and dissatisfied in himself, exercised with affliction, and fretful because he is so, counts every day to be ten, weeks are years with him, and years are ages; when he looks forward a small Time is a tedious duration, and he is ready to conclude will never arrive, nor the present hour or day be at an end. So *Job*, who yet was an example of patience. ^b *When I lie down I say, when shall I arise, and the night be gone? And I am full of tossing too and fro unto the dawning of the day.* Now when there are so many afflicted persons in the world, and so many more discontented, it is not at all wonderful that there are so many to whom Time appears longer in the prospect than it does in the review.

Hence by the way, I would observe the aggravated misery of the damned. If to a man in a suffering state, or even in a state which would be comfortable enough, was he not his own tor-

^b *Job* vii. 4.

tormentor, a space of Time which he can easily look to the end of is so very grievous; Lord, (think I) what must Eternity be, a duration that hath no period, when it is to be worn away in pain, shame, anguish, and despair! A groundless discontent often makes our burthen, but theirs is really intolerable.

4. The Time to come is extended by the hopes we cherish in relation to it. We first endeavour to persuade ourselves (and it is no great difficulty to do this when we heartily set about it) that by such a Time we shall see a great many happy events; and then having taken up this persuasion, we are in haste to have our hopes crowned with enjoyment, and think every minute in the mean while to be double. Thus when the mother of *Sisera* was eagerly expecting the return of her son from a glorious and joyful conquest, she is described as looking out of the window, and crying, *Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?* Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself, *Have they not sped? Have they not divided the prey? To Sisera a prey of divers colours of needle-work on both sides, meet for them that take the spoil?* The mother imagined she should never see her son's arrival, so impatiently did she long for the welcome time; as indeed she never did. The wiseman hath observed that

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^d *Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.* The mind grows tired with its own expectations as a bird wearies itself in beating against the sides of its cage. Our impatience to be in possession of our wishes makes us accuse Time, that unfainting traveller, of being slack in his motion; wherein we are like the merchant, who, having ships at sea richly freighted, fancies they are long in their voyage, tho' winds and waves conspire to drive them to their haven. Thus (as an ingenious author takes notice) " Altho' the whole of life is allowed
" by every one to be short, (and I may add,
" they all complain of its shortness) the several divisions of it appear long and tedious. The Usurer would be very well satisfied to have all the Time annihilated that lies between the present moment and next quarter-day. The Minor longs to be at age, then to be a man of business, then to make up an estate, then to arrive at honours, then to retire. Several hours of the day hang upon our hands; nay we wish away whole years, and travel through Time as thro' a country filled with many wild and empty wastes, which we would fain hurry over, that we may arrive at those several little settlements, or imaginary points of rest, which are dispersed up and down in it." And notwithstanding that we are generally disappointed in our hopes, we re-
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new them again as fast as they are broken in pieces, and so continue doing till death comes and convinces us that our long life was but a moment, and our fine hopes but a dream.

I shall now make a brief Application of this point. It is certain, and a thing not denied, that the same portion of Time, as it is past and to come, appears of a different length; in this case our concern is to be on our guard, and to take heed that this wrong appearance do not delude and insnare us, and produce errors in our practice. And that it may not we should often call to mind these two things—that the Time past is much longer than it appears—and that the Time to come is much shorter.

1. It will be of use frequently to consider, that the Time past is much longer than it appears; I mean, as it is a part of our short life. It is necessary we should consider this, that we may be thankful for the Time we have enjoyed, may be humble and penitent for having spent it no better, and see the necessity of quickening our pace, and doubling our diligence for the future. Time is the gift of God, of such inestimable value, that gold and silver are not to be weighed against it. And if we judge of the Time we have lived by its appearance, what must follow? Must we not conceive more meanly of the gift, and detract from the bounty of the

the giver? A benefactor supplies me with a considerable sum of money, which, in case I should judge of it by the figure it makes through one end of a prospective glass, I should esteem but a trifle; but as I should be ridiculous to ground my judgement of it on such a view, so I should be ungrateful: and yet, if it be not the same thing, it is one very much like it, that we are all guilty of, when taking a survey of our past Time we forget to consider it as much more than it appears.—It is further needful we should thus consider our Time, that we may be duly humbled for having mispent and misemployed so much of it. We cast a careless eye over the Time past of our lives, and so value it as a thing of no moment; but oh, we forget how many years one after another have been indulged us; we forget how many opportunities have occurred, and been slighted; we forget how much Time we have had to work out our salvation, and how little, how very little of this important work is yet done! Let us be humbled under a sense of our idleness, our folly, our guilt.—Finally, the same thought is expedient to teach us greater care and industry in improving this talent. Is so much of my short life gone? So much of my little stock spent? I find I have none left for vanity and sloth; happy, if by my utmost application I can repair my losses. A man that hath been loitering
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away his Time, and consults not the clock or the sun to know the hour of the day, but concludes he hath not gone far in the day, because the Time hath slid away unobserved, will be incourged in his sloth, and still delay to set to his business; it is the same in our spiritual concerns.

2. We should consider that the Time to come is much shorter than it appears. Here what is wanting in real length we piece out in our imagination, in which we are extremely imprudent; for besides that we may not live so many years as we childishly count upon, and it is very probable that we shall not, if we should see those years come and go, they would shrink in the wearing as much as all before them. And why should we look upon it as a long Time that we have to live? Shall we not hereby be deceived into thoughts and pursuits that agree not to frail dying creatures? Shall we not be tempted to delay and postpone the concerns of our souls? And put ourselves under the power of things present and sensible? This is the usual and almost unavoidable consequence of mens regarding the remaining part of their lives as a long space of Time; whereas the effects of considering it as much shorter than it appears to a misjudging fancy, are as beneficial as the others are mischievous. For were this truth once well settled in our apprehensions and often and seri-

seriously thought on by us, *that Time is short*, we should be quite other persons than we are, and look upon all things about us with quite another eye. See how the Apostle improves this meditation, *But this I say, brethren, the Time is short. It remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away.* This thought would serve to cool our desires, to moderate our passions, to check our hopes, our fears, and our delight about these perishing things. We should not be thoughtful for to morrow, nor boast of to morrow, because future Time is much too short to warrant one or the other. Supposing riches to increase, we should not set our hearts upon them, the Time is so very short in which we can enjoy them. Supposing our troubles to multiply, yet should we bear up under them with christian courage and magnanimity, knowing our afflictions to be both light and for a moment. And is a momentary comfort or trouble worth making such a stir about? Would it not be a folly to let my affections be carried out to things that are on the wing, and fly away with the swiftness of an eagle? Or to sink

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under a burthen that will shortly be taken off from my shoulders? And as this representation of Time would have a good influence on our passions, to regulate them when in danger of being too powerfully excited by the good or evil occurrences of life, so would it have an influence as kindly upon our actions. “ Since my Time is so much shorter than it appears, I know what I have to do. My business is to serve and glorify my God, and save my soul; to walk by the gospel rule, to improve every opportunity to my spiritual good, and always to act as one on his probation for eternity, and just ready to be summoned to his audit; looking for, and hastening to, the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.”

So much for the first doctrine, *viz.* The same portion of Time appears longer or shorter, as it is past or to come.

II. In the sight of God the longest term of years is as nothing. *Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand's-breadth, and my age is as nothing before thee.* Speaks the Psalmist this only because the life of man is now cut short, and *the days of our years are threescore years and ten?* Was it, I say, in respect only of the present narrow bounds of

^f Psal. xxxix, 5.

of human life, that he saith *his age was as nothing before God?* No, for in my text, alluding to the long lives of the first generation of men, he saith, *That a thousand years in God's sight are but as yesterday, or as a watch in the night.* And it is the same if we remove the boundary thousands or millions of years forward; this mighty sum of years consisting of as many figures as can stand by one another in the longest line, is in his eye but a collection of so many cyphers, of which the sum total is *nothing.* It is easy to give an account how this may be, and indeed that it cannot be otherwise, I shall mention in a few particulars.

I. God is infinite in knowledge. He comprehends in one view the past, present, and to come; and with a single glance beholds that Eternity of duration which hath neither beginning or ending. ^e *Great is our Lord, and of great power, his understanding is infinite.* It is on account of this supereminent knowledge of his that he challenges the heathen deities. ^h *Let them shew us what shall happen; let them shew the former things what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare to us things to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods. Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? And before Time, that*

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^e Psal. cxlvii. 7. ^h Isa. xli. 22, &c.

we may say, *He is righteous?* The glory he afterwards himself lays claim to. *I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, nor my praise to graven Images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare, before they spring forth I tell you of them.* From the height of his understanding, as from a watch-tower, he surveys the long series and progress of ages; and those events which are hid from us in the obscure womb of Futurity, are to him ever and alike present. Now to an eye that can command this boundless prospect, the age of man (I might as well have said of the world) is scarce a Point. A space of ground, but a mile in compass, appears of a great extent to one that stands on a level, and cannot look beyond it; while a person, that from a high mountain can on every side see a vast way around him, passes over such a spot almost without notice. How much more would he do so, if he had a clear idea of the distance between earth and the remotest heaven, and could at once take in the whole universe. The whole globe of earth in such a comparison would be no more than a single grain of sand is now. It is thus, if I may so explain it, that the Omniscient God beholds the longest term of years as bounded at both ends by Eternity, in which it is swallowed up and lost, as a single drop in the wide ocean.

2. He

2. He is God blessed for ever. His title is ^k *the blessed God*; He enjoys the perfection of Beatitude, and never hath the least dissatisfaction to interrupt his divine contentment, *in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are rivers of pleasure for evermore.* And as a stream of water runing over a smooth bottom, and of a great depth besides, glides with a still and insensible tho' rapid motion, so ages of delight slide on in a profound peace and tranquillity, and are accounted as moments by him who is infinitely happy and well pleased in the contemplation and injoyment of himself. We find that joy adds wings to Time itself, and that the more compleat and ecstasick our joy, the swifter is the flight of Time. How quick do the hours come round when we are pleased with ourselves, and with our company. But our best pleasures on this side heaven are imperfect, and of short continuance; otherwise life, when it was past, would appear but like a winter's-day. In heaven, the blessedness of which place is as large as the capacities of its inhabitants, and as immortal as themselves, a Day equals an Age of ours in worth, and an Age in length seems not to exceed a Day. But tho' the blessedness of the righteous in that upper world be perfect in its kind, yet, when compared with the blessedness of the supreme Being, it

bears no other proportion then that of finite to infinite. How little must be all Time then, before him who is thus incomprehensibly blessed! It must in his sight be as much less than it is in the thoughts of the most happy of his creatures, as his felicity is greater than theirs.

3. God is eternal. He not only hath a comprehensive knowledge of Eternity, but hath already existed an Eternity. He is the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End; the beginning or existence to all things, and therefore to be the end of their actions, himself without either beginning or end. *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever he had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting he is God*; is the language of the *Psalms* from which my text is taken. A little after which it is added, *A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday*. So that, you see, the *Psalmist* resolves it into the Eternity of God, that the greatest finite duration is contemptible in his sight. He that was numberless ages before any thing else had a being, of whom we are not able to say that there ever was a Time when he was not—He whose duration is not capable of being measured by any lengths of Time never so often repeated; who, having been from Eternity, will not have existed longer ten millions of years hence, than he had ten millions of years ago; how is he to be adored

adored for this unfathomable attribute by all reasonable creatures, all whose years thrown together can make no addition to his Eternity! Our own experience supplies us with the observation, that the longer we have been in the world, the more contracted and diminutive is the notion we have of future Time. The child fancies a single year is a vast while in revolving; the youth looking forward to manhood, thinks it a prodigious while before he arrives to that state. A few years, because they have not seen many, are by the child and the youth esteemed a wonderful term; but now to the man far advanced in life, the same portion of Time shews much less; to a person before the flood, who was some hundreds of years old, they must have appeared less again; to the angels of light they must appear still proportionably less, according as it was longer since they were created and began to be; but to the everlasting God that duration, which a man, an angel conceives great, is Infinitely little.

I proceed now to the Application, which I had chiefly an eye to. And here, in the *First* place, I shall apply the doctrine in a few Inferences.

I. Is the longest term of years, as nothing in the sight of God? Then this may help to solve that objection against divine Providence which hath been sometimes

urged as unanswerable, taken from the prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the righteous. This, I say, is abundantly enough to answer the difficulty, that the afflictions of the one, and the prosperity of the other are both temporary. And a temporary duration in the eye of God is as none at all. I called them *temporary*, when I should have said that they are only *momentary*. Art thou afflicted, and ready to cry out with the disconsolate Psalmist, *Is his mercy clean gone for ever?* Consider, christian, it is thy impatience makes thee look on the Time of thy affliction as for ever, which in itself, and as God beholds it, is but a short lived moment. So doth God himself speak in the Prophet *Isaiab.* ¹ *For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redemecr.* How remarkable are those words! How full of consolation! It is only *in a little wrath* that God withdraws from his people; and this *little wrath is only for a moment*, yea, for a small moment; but his mercies are great, his kindness is everlasting. Think of this, and repine no more against Providence. Let every mouth be stoped, and all the world stand silent before God. Art thou a prosperous sinner? Lift
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¹ *Isai.* liv. 7, 8.

not up thine horn on high, speak not with a stiff neck, for promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, but God is the judge; he puteth down one, and seteth up another. What is the duration of thy prosperity to him? Mistake not, man, it is but a little while that he seems to be deaf and blind to thy provocations; and he may let thee alone for so little a while, and yet be just and holy too. What saith the Psalmist? ^m *Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou didst cast them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment? They are utterly consumed with terrors. As in a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest thou shalt despise their image!* Thou reckonest thyself to stand firm, the Psalmist tells thee, *thou art set in a slippery place*; thou blestest thyself as the happiest of men, he tells thee thy happiness is but a dream; in thy own conceit thou flourishest for a long Time, he tells thee that it is only for a moment. Exalt not thyself against God; misconstrue not his silence; insult not his Providence; the Lord shall laugh at thee, for he seeth that thy day is coming, the day of vengeance, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.

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^m Psal. lxxiii. 18, &c.

2. This consideration accounts for the seemingly slow accomplishment of God's Promises and Threatenings. The promise made to *Abraham* of inheriting the land of *Canaan* was not fulfilled till near five hundred years after. The promise of the *Messiah* to become incarnate, and redeem mankind was given immediately after the fall, but issued not into the event till the end of about four thousand years. And from hence *Celsus*, a great enemy to the christian religion, takes occasion to compare God to *Jupiter* in the Comedy, as waking out of a long sleep *. But when it is considered, that in the sight of God *a thousand years are but as yesterday*, and that *he calleth those things which be not, as though they were*, no time is long that intervenes between the promise and its accomplishment. And therefore it is observable, concerning the instance first mentioned, that God saith to *Abraham*, *I have made thee a father of many nations*—he doth not say, *I will make thee so*—to signify that there is no difference of Time with respect to him. He ⁿ*calleth those things which are not, as though they were*. And tho' before Christ came in the flesh several ages were elapsed, yet it being considered, that *he was the lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world* in the decree of God, and in types and figures, and that the efficacy of his death reached as well
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* Origen contra Celsum, lib. 6. ⁿ Rom. iv. 17.

to all the generations before as to those that followed, the lateness of his coming cannot be thought to derogate from the wisdom or love of God in sending him into the world. So that what the Prophet affirms of a particular case, holds universally true. ° *The vision is for an appointed Time; but at the end it shall speak, and shall not lie; tho' it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will surely come, it will not tarry.* In the same verse the prophecy is supposed *to tarry*, and yet said *not to tarry*; the reason is, that in our thoughts it taries, but as God's thoughts are not as ours, in reality it makes haste. Let us apply this to the promises of our future rest and glory. Beholding them afar off we should embrace them, confess that we are strangers and pilgrims upon earth; as such make the best of the entertainment we meet with, and contentedly wait our happiness till we come where is its proper seat and mansion. Death lies between us and the felicity promised; but how far off is death? At most, no further than a few years; and then the everlasting door opens, and we not only behold the inheritance of the saints, but enter upon it. And then for the divine threatenings, though it be most true that God is not swift to execute them, but patiently waits for the effect of his lenity and forbearance, it is not therefore the less certain

° Hab. ii. 3.

tain on the other hand, that he does not so delay the punishment threatened, as any way to encourage the presumption of sinners; or to give them the least ground to believe, that, however peremptory his threatenings be, he will not be exact to his word. If he defers the stroke, it is to give thee Time to disarm his anger by thy repentance and amendment; and after all, the utmost limits of his patience (which when compared with the heinousness of our sins, and his infinite holiness and justice deserves our astonishment) in regard of his Eternity are very inconsiderable. He liveth for ever.

3. Behold here the foundation on which the general and last judgement of the world is delayed! The old world enjoyed God's forbearance for several centuries; but however before the conclusion of two thousand years, being overflowed with water, perisheth. Since the deluge the world hath, in some ages of it, been deplorably wicked, and is so at this present, and yet hath stood many thousand of years the object of God's favourable regard, and, for ought we know, may do so some thousands of years longer. We who are apt to wonder, why God should continue such an apostate race, and bear the manners of so many generations of sinners, can hardly forbear saying as the scoffers mentioned by the Apostle *Peter*, *Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell*

fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. But the doctrine contained in my text is a plain confutation of this profane arguing, and applied to this very purpose by that Apostle, who, borrowing the words of the Psalmist with a very little variation, saith, ^p *But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also with the works that are therein shall be burnt up.* This Apostle saith, *that the day of the Lord will come; another of the inspired penmen speaks of* ^q *yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.* Not to mention, that the world hath not yet filled up the measure of its iniquities, nor God yet filled up the number of his people; not to mention, that the works of Providence are not yet finished, that prophecies are yet unfulfilled, and glorious designs yet unaccomplished; I shall only take notice of the consideration which the text suggests, that the long term of

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^p 2 Pet. iii. 8, &c. ^q Heb. x. 37.

of years, whatever it may seem to us, is nothing in his sight who hath Eternity subject to his view. *A thousand years are but as yesterday*, and consequently the many thousands that may pass from the beginning to the final consummation of things, are, at most, but like so many days that are fled and gone. Be it, therefore, never more said, *that our Lord delayeth his coming*.—These are the Inferences, which I thought did naturally flow from the doctrine. I now hasten to a use of Exhortation.

Secondly, Let us then be exhorted to frame our apprehensions of Time by the judgment of God. After our utmost endeavour there will be a vast proportion between our thoughts of it and his ; however let us bring our conceptions as near as we can to this standard, and the best method we can take for this purpose is to compare Time with Eternity. This we can do in some degree having an idea of Eternity ; and this we should do because we are appointed to Eternity.

1. We are in some sort able to compare Time and Eternity, being not without an idea of this interminable duration, tho' very imperfect. We have not a positive, adequate, and comprehensive view of Eternity, no created Being hath so ; it is the prerogative of the Infinite and Eternal Mind ; but we can conceive of it after an obscure and indefinite manner, somewhat like the survey a man takes of the ocean from on board a vessel sailing

ing in the midst of it; he sees the ocean, though not the whole ocean, and, where his sight is terminated by its own weakness, can perceive that the ocean extends further than he can see. Inferior creatures are shut up within the present Time, but the mind of man diffuses and stretches itself into futurity, and passing over all the bounds of imagination, can suppose a duration that is without bound. Now when the thoughts do thus dwell upon Eternity, how does Time, the longest Time, disappear! Conceive a mountain of sand rising up to the stars, (it is a similitude often made use of to illustrate this subject) though this amazing heap be supposed to waste but a sand every million of years, it will in Time be exhausted, and sink down to a level; but Eternity will never, never, be all spent; when innumerable ages have run out, it will be as far from ending as ever, because indeed it hath no end.

2. As we are able to make this comparison between Time and Eternity, so we are nearly concerned to do it, in regard that God hath designed us for Eternity. A plain proof that this is the intention of our Creator is the idea of Eternity, mentioned before, joined with the restless unextinguishable desire of it that every man may observe in himself; this idea and this desire are both natural, I mean belonging to primitive nature; and therefore we may well conclude there

there is some object to match this idea, and to satisfy this desire. God never planted desires in any of his creatures for no other end but to be their torment; as it is evident the desire, without the hope, of immortality would be to a man: insomuch that, setting aside the belief of an immortal life, it is impossible for Omnipotence to make a rational creature perfectly happy, since the shadow of death would darken the brightest scene; and the fear of it, like a worm hid in the root, consume and kill all his delights; and with this evidence from Reason agrees the testimony of Scripture, *Mat. xxv. 46*. And as our idea of Eternity is a proof of it, so is it likewise an indication of the nature of that Eternity which is reserved for us. Our idea of Eternity is not of a duration actually infinite, but of one that is increasing to infinity. And such is the Eternity that man is to enjoy. Our actual existence will be always finite and temporary; for after never so many revolutions of ages, were we then to cease to exist, the line of our duration would be terminated both ways, and consequently be finite; for which reason it is not so proper to say of any creature that it is *eternal*, as that it is *immortal*. This mortal life had a beginning, and will have an end; the life to come hath a beginning, but no end. The soul will never once die; and the man, after the resurrection, will not die any more.

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Now when this is the case, that we belong to Eternity, and have so great an interest in it, should we not often think of Eternity? Should we not often compare Time and Eternity together? The *Persians* have this moral sentence inscribed on a publick bridge at *Ispahan*—*The world is a true bridge, make an end of going over it*—Over this bridge we are travelling into a boundless region, an eternal world. We must be stupid not to reflect whither we are going; without all understanding, to have everlasting life before us, and not comparatively to despise this temporal, this fading life. Were we used soberly to contemplate the difference between a temporal and eternal duration, we should reckon this life but a span, we should transact the business of life, and receive the events of it with more moderation; and an awful concern for Eternity would silence all our distracting cares about Time, and the things of Time, as the groans of a dying man are no more heard amidst the roar of cannon.

I shall conclude the whole with a little Advice concerning the *New Year*. Let us consider that all our Times are not only in the sight of God, as the objects of his foreknowledge, but in his hand, as subject to his uncontroulable decree. Let us therefore pray, as the author of this Psalm, *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply*

our hearts unto wisdom. Particularly let us shew our wisdom in these two things.

1. Let us resolve, each one for himself, to live after a manner as if this was to be our *last year*. It is not impossible but it may; nor very unlikely, considering the many thousands that every hour leave this world in one part of it or other. But granting we are more likely to live than to die this year, yet seeing the event doth not always follow the greatest likelihood, and the consequence of being mistaken is so very terrible, and never to be retrieved, it cannot but be our wisdom to act upon the supposition of our dying this year. Our last year will come; this none of you questions; and when it comes may begin altogether like this; we may be possessed of as much health and strength at our entrance into it, and every thing may promise as fairly; and for the same reason as my last year may begin like this, why may not this be my last? Have I any marks by which to know my last year when it arrives? As in the days before the flood, *They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark; and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away;* and as it shall be the same when the son of man cometh to judge the world, no less sudden and unexpected is the approach of death to particular persons. It surprizes them

† Mat. xxiv. 37, &c.

them in the midst of their business and pleasures, hurries away their souls before the tribunal of God, naked, trembling, astonished, and in that very day all their thoughts perish.

But you are in the flower and strength of youth, and have no apprehensions of death's being so near. This, I confess, were somewhat if young men were privileged from the arrest of death, or not so liable to its stroke as those that are older. But alas, do we not see the young man and the old, the strong and the feeble, carried without any order to the grave? ^f *One man (as Job expresses it) dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. Another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure.* Well then, since I must die, and may die this year; what do I talk of this year? Since this very night my soul may be required of me, I will from this moment begin to live as a dying creature. I will settle my peace with God by a sincere repentance of all my sins against him; make sure of an interest in the only Saviour of sinners; esteem religion my chief business and concern; work out my salvation with fear and trembling; redeem my Time; be holy in all manner of conversation; die daily to the world; mind heavenly things; and converse much with myself, with my God, and with Eternity. It is thus a dying creature

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^f Job xxi. 23, &c.

ought to live, and such by the grace of God, I am resolved my future life shall be. It will be no prejudice, nor disservice at all to me so to live, though I should survive this, and many years more. By living after this manner I shall render myself fit for longer life, for the improvement, and for the enjoyment of it ; I shall have more peace in my own bosom, and pass the remainder of my days free from the servile dread of death. And for this alone, if there was nothing else, it is worth my while to lead a holy life. If I should die this year, I am safe and happy. Death, come when it will, cannot be untimely ; or where, and how it will, cannot be terrible. I foresee I shall be tempted to worldliness, to delays, to a vain confidence of Futurity ; but I will encounter and overcome the temptation with this thought—*that possibly I am to die this year, and before I am advanced far into it*—which is the consideration with which the Apostle *James* represses the overforward hopes and purposes of some, that they would go to such a city, and there continue a year, and by and sell and get gain ; *whereas* (saith he) *ye know not what shall be on the morrow* (they made sure of a year, and knew not what should be on the morrow) *for what is your life ? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanishes away.*

2. Let

2. Let us provide for the changes of the year, which may be great, sudden, and many. In the other world eternal ages will roll on without any the least change, but it is not so here. For our parts, we know not what a year, a month, a week, a day, may bring forth; yea as the wise Poet observes,

*Quid quisque vitet nunquam homini satis
Cautum est in horas.——*

A man can never be sufficiently on his guard against the accidents which the next hour may bring with it. What is more common than to hear people say, when any notable alteration hath befallen them, *How little did I think of this such a Time; as yesterday, or the last week!* We shall do well to make a like reflection before-hand. How little do I now imagine what changes a short Time will produce! There is a Time to every purpose and to every event, and hardly is there that thing to be mentioned which doth not become seasonable in its turn; and when it is so it shall come round. As the night against the day, and winter against summer, so is adversity set over against prosperity. Times are hidden from all but the Almighty; *For man also knoweth not his Time; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of*

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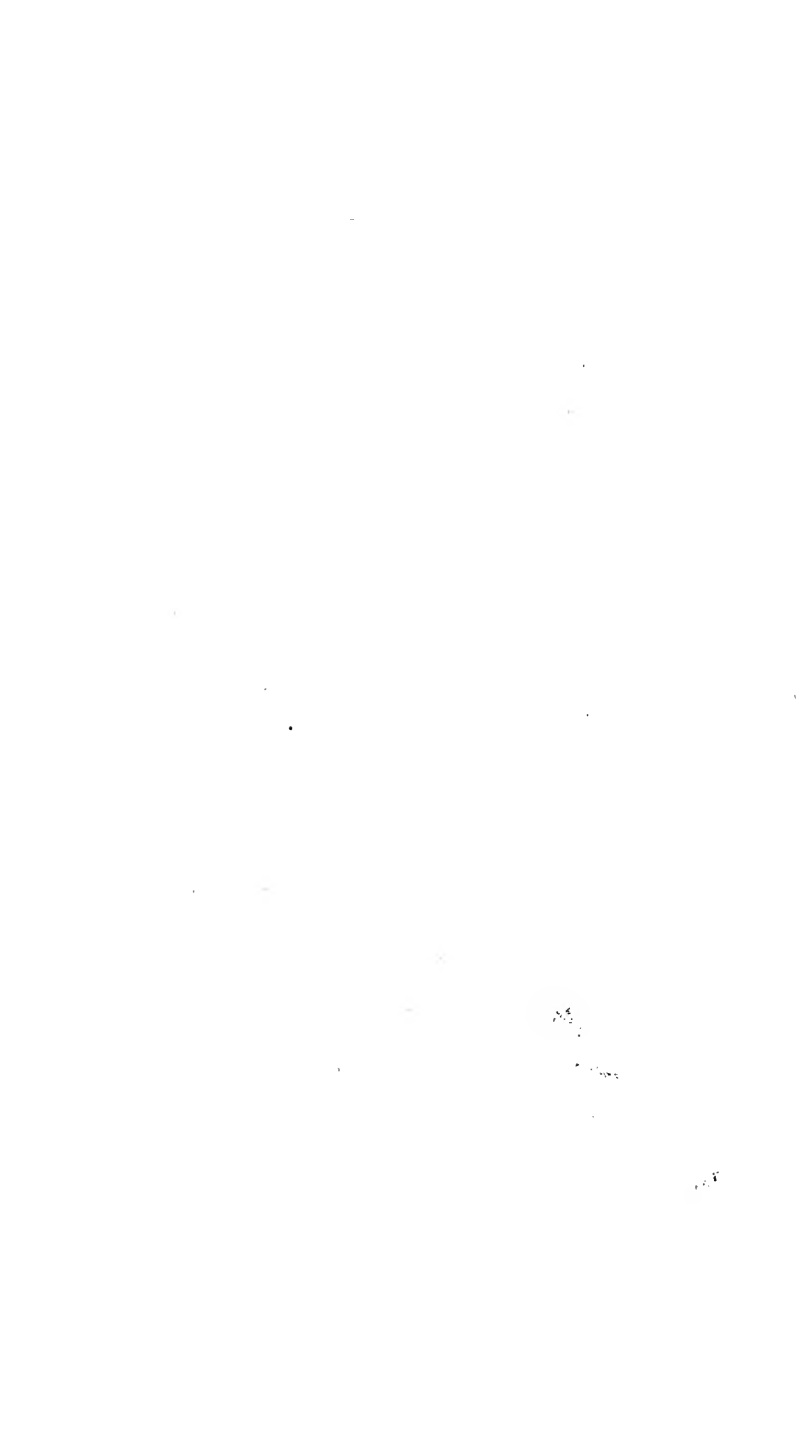
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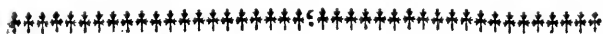
men snared in an evil Time, when it cometh suddenly upon them. This change of Times is necessary to instruct us in the knowledge both of the world, and of ourselves; to convince us of its vanity, and that it cannot be our happiness, our rest, our home, and final state; of ourselves, how ignorant, how weak, how dependent we are; to cure us of our pride, our earthliness, our sensuality, to mortify corruption, and to improve the graces of the divine Spirit in us. Against these changes if we are willing to be provided, let us secure a refuge in God, and arm and prepare our own minds. *God is the strength of the righteous in the Time of trouble.* By cleaving to him we enjoy the benefit of his strength and immutability; as a leaf which lying on the ground is driven to and fro by every wind, when it hangs and flourishes on the tree can endure the shock of violent storms. It is a mutable world that we live in, but under the direction of an unchangeable God, whose purposes of love vary not, tho' his dispensations do. All our Times are in his hands, he orders their succession, and this with a gracious view to the spiritual and final happiness of his people. He will sustain us under our burthens, and deliver us out of our troubles; for which reason let us trust in him at all Times. And next to a well-grounded trust in God, let us remember

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to arm and prepare our own minds, with a wise foresight of the evils that are to come, which are not half so grievous and stunning when they come not unexpected; with christian patience, fortitude and resolution, which will steel the mind, and render it invulnerable; and finally, with the hope of a more blessed world, which as the anchor doth the ship, will keep us from fluctuating with the things around us. By this means we shall have as much steadfastness and settlement as the nature of our state and circumstances in the world will permit. We may be sometimes a little shaken, but never removed from the firm basis we stand on. The assured belief, the lively consideration, and comfortable hope of a future state, where a thousand years spent in full content and felicity are but as one day; of a city that hath foundations; a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; a crown of glory that fadeth not away; of unmixed joys, uninterrupted satisfaction, and pleasures that run with a perpetually fresh and never failing current, have virtue more than sufficient to fortify the soul against present changes, and to preserve it in an even state of peace and tranquillity, till God shall command its discharge from this body of sin and death, and receive it to its everlasting rest.







Dying in FAITH.

A
S E R M O N,

Occasioned by the

D E A T H

Of the Reverend

Mr. S T E P H E N J A M E S.

1725.



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T O

Mrs. JAMES.

MADAM,

AS it was in compliance with the request of Mr. James, which he was pleased to signify some time before his Death, that I preached the following Sermon, so I now publish it as Yours. The nature of the Subject, so admirably fitted to animate the christian in a course of Holiness and Obedience, and to administer comfort under the loss of pious Relatives, was, I believe, your principal inducement in desiring its publication. The Argument is confessedly noble; I wish it may not fail of its effect for want of more spirit and life in the management. As to the sad Occasion of this Discourse, You need not be minded that the Dispensations of Providence, however unsearchable they may sometimes be, are always righteous, and wise, and good; and this, with the consideration of that better world, where all that die in Faith enjoy the transporting pleasures of sight, ought to reconcile You to
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the removal of One, with whom You had so long lived in the tenderest friendship, and in a union which nothing but death could dissolve. May the memory of our Friends departed in the Lord lead us to meditate oftner of that happy Place and Society, from which all sin and sorrow, and imperfection, are for ever excluded, and prove a most powerful incitement, to live more as fellow-citizens with the saints, and expectants of the same blessedness and glory.

I am,

MADAM,

Your Affectionate Friend

and Humble Servant,

HENRY GROVE.



S E R M O N IV.

Dying in Faith.

H E B R E W S XI. 13.

These all died in Faith----

AND O how desirous is such a death! What wise and good man would not chuse to die in Faith, much rather than to live in the happiest condition this world affords without it? He that liveth in pleasure is dead while he liveth; he that dieth in Faith, though he die, yet shall he live; yea, he does not so truly die, as pass from one life to another, to a pure and perfect and endless life, from a life that is mixed with death; while he seems to fall by the hand of his last enemy, he riseth more glorious from that fall, and, yielding himself a captive, is more than conqueror through Faith. The man that liveth without Faith, lives under the dominion of sin, which reigns in his mortal body, is big with innumerable

merable evils, and, at last, bringeth forth death. How much happier he, who, dying in Faith, returns his body to the dust, that he may receive it free from all taint of corruption, and all the penál effects of sin, at the resurrection! Thus happy were all those divine souls, whose Faith is celebrated in this chapter, whatever notion a vain world might have of them, or what treatment soever a wicked and ill-natured world saw fit to give them. So many examples as we here meet with of an heroick Faith, so many victories and triumphs are we to remember. *These all died in Faith.* But who were *all these*? All before-mentioned are primarily intended; but, as we may very well suppose, not only; since by parity of reason the same may be affirmed of all that follow; the Faith they died in was, in general, that which in the first verse is described as *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.* Faith here is not opposed to *Reason*, but to *Sense*.

Through Faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things that do appear. By Faith also we apprehend not only the Existence, but the Nature and Providence of God, a supreme, eternal and most perfect Being, every where present, but no where visible; these things are plainly out of the sphere of Sense, but not beyond that
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of Reason; the same Writer (I mean the Apostle *Paul*, who most probably was the Author of this Epistle) having elsewhere observed^a, that *the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse, who knowing God, (or being capable of knowing him by the light of Reason) do not glorify him as God.* Of these unseen things Faith is therefore said to be the evidence, because to him that firmly believes them they have the same reality, and make much the same deep and lively impressions as things manifest to Sense. Besides which property of Faith, there is this further, that *it is the substance of things hoped for; that is, of future good things, inspiring the believer with a confident expectation of them, which sets them full in his view, and gives him, as it were, immediate possession.* Such are those good things which God, who cannot lie, hath promised, and which the Faith of these dying Saints more particularly and intensely regarded; for so, after the words, *these all died in Faith*, it immediately follows, *not having received the Promises, but having seen them afar off they were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth; not in this or that particular part of the earth only*

^a Rom. i. 20, 21.

only, in opposition to *Canaan*, but in whatever part of the earth they did now or might hereafter reside, in opposition to *Heaven*. The leading Promise of all was that of the Messiah, the Seed of the Woman, the Saviour of the World; and this, without all peradventure, ought not to be wholly excluded the meaning of the Text, being the chief foundation or corner-stone on which the hopes of the pious have been built in all ages.

The settlement of *Abraham's* Posterity in the Land of *Canaan*, is another Promise that makes a considerable figure in the beginning of the sacred History; but neither this nor the former belong so immediately to the scope of the words; not this it is plain, because it concerned not those who lived before *Abraham*, to whom the promise of a numerous and national posterity was first made, or after the *Israelites* had full and quiet possession of this good land; of all whom, nevertheless, it is said, that *they received not the Promise*, v. 39. not indeed either of them, for this reason, that the Faith these good men died in is, by the three following verses, made to point directly to a future life, and a happiness there; *they that say such things* (namely, that they are Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth) *declare plainly, that they seek a country; and truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned;*

returned; but now they desire a better country, even a heavenly, wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, having prepared for them a city. So that it was a heavenly country, a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, v. 10. that their Faith was fixed upon when dying; conceiving the rest which their Posterity should, or which they themselves did, enjoy in *Canaan*, no otherwise than as a faint type or shadow of that everlasting rest which remaineth for the people of God. I shall only observe further, that as the Promise of a Saviour was, in order of nature, the First, so this of a Blessedness to come was the Last; as that supports all the other Promises, so this finishes and crowns them. ^b *This is the Promise which he hath promised us, even eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* From the Words I shall take occasion to handle this general Point of instruction, that

Holy men of old all died in Faith of an unseen Reward.

In speaking to which Doctrine I shall endeavour to satisfy these two Inquiries.

- I. What we are to understand by their *Faith of an unseen Reward.*
- II. What by their *Dying in this Faith.*

I

I. What

^b 1 John ii. 25. v. 11.

I. What are we to understand by their *Faith of an unseen Reward*? It seems to signify these three things. A full persuasion of the futurity of such a Reward---A preference of it in their most deliberate and constant choice to any worldly and temporary happiness whatsoever---And a reasonable hope of their being in the number of those for whom this Reward is laid up.

1. This Faith of theirs implies a firm persuasion of the truth of a future Reward. They were all of them ready to pronounce as the Psalmist, *Verily, there is a Reward for the righteous*---there is another life for all men; there is a life of blessedness and glory for the good. It is reasonable to think, that earlier ages resembled the present in this, that there were too many who laughed alike at all hopes and fears of an afterstate, as groundless and imaginary; and, perhaps, there were more then of this atheistical humour than there are now. Sure I am, if the number of unbelievers be as great now, they are more inexcusable, since the Doctrine of Life and Immortality hath received such an addition of light and evidence both from Reason and Revelation.

But what sensual careless sinners treated as a dream and a fable, the serious and thinking part of mankind always revered as a most awful reality. They could never
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be of the opinion, that man perisheth as the beast, the soul with the body, the thinking with the unthinking part, the part in which man resembles his maker, with the part in which he is on a level with inferior creatures; that virtue and piety, when removed out of sight, are as much forgotten of God as by an ungrateful world; or that an Almighty Being hath no better rewards for souls that love him, and whom he loves, than such things as he bestows upon them in this life, and, indeed, in common upon his friends and his enemies: they could never suppose this to be all the meaning of God's *having respect to them*, of their *pleasing God*, and of those big words, that *he was their God*, and *their exceeding great reward*; the significancy and loftiness of the language would put such a lean and beggerly sense quite out of countenance. Why ^d *was not God ashamed to be called their God*, but because he had prepared for them a City? As much as to say, if he had not prepared for them a city, a portion more complete and durable than any he gave them here below, it would have been a reproach to the friendship, which, in calling himself *their God*, he professed to have for them. To be the Friend of a King sounds great; to be the Friend of God sounds infinitely greater than to be one's self a King. Whether their Faith all along took in the

^e Gen. iv. 4. xv. 1. xvii. 7.

^d Heb. xi. 5, 16.

Resurrection of the Body, as well as the Immortality of the Soul, and a State of Recompences, is not, some may think, altogether so certain. It is very likely that it did; and that, besides a tradition in the church concerning this article of the Resurrection, they argued the same thing from their special interest in God before-mentioned---“ For if the
 “ Lord be my God, he is the God of my
 “ intire Person, not of one part of me only;
 “ this vile Body shall fare the better for its
 “ relation to a Soul that is related to God;
 “ and though it *see corruption*, shall one day
 “ be *raised incorruptable*.” They knew that the death of the Body was the execution of a sentence past upon man for the first transgression, and that therefore should the Body for ever continue in a state of death, it would look as if God was not, and never would be fully reconciled to them. Concerning some of these antient Saints we read towards the end of the Chapter, “*That they were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection*.” These therefore had the knowledge of a Resurrection. And if these, why not all? Especially when the Translation of *Enoch* in his Body seems to have been designed as an early intimation of the nature, and extent of the happiness reserved for good men in another life.

life. Of all the Faithful shall *Enoch* and *Elijah* alone hereafter live, and be rewarded, in their Bodies? Reason will not allow us to suppose such a strange difference as this in the happiness of good men.

2. Their Faith of an unseen Reward was attended with a preference of it, in their most deliberate and constant choice, before any worldly and temporary happiness whatsoever. They did not merely talk contemptably of the world now and then, which is common enough, but think so too: it was not a notion they took up in a discontented humour, and laid aside again when the fit was over, but it was their standing uniform judgment *that all is Vanity*; that man's chief happiness lies not on this side the grave, but on the other, not in created goods, but in the love and enjoyment of the Creator.

'The Lord is my portion, saith my Soul, therefore will I hope in him. " Ah, what are all
" these things without my God? What is
" this earth if I must quit all claim to my
" heavenly country? Might I have the whole
" world upon these terms, I would reject it
" with indignation. Alas, the world is little
" to me now, when I am dying it will be
" less, and after death nothing at all!"

Where-ever Providence appointed them the place of their habitation, in a more de-

lightful or less agreeable scene, and whatever were the circumstances allotted them, they never reckoned themselves at home, never said, *it is good for us to be here*, never voted for an immortality upon earth, *but confessed that they were Strangers and Pilgrims*. This was not the language only of the *Shepherd*, whose condition had little more fixedness than a tent, which is perpetually removed from one place to another; ^e *And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, the days of the years of my Pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years, few and evil have the days of the Years of my life been; but of the King too,* ^h *I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner as all my fathers were; his dwelling in a Palace, and they in Tents, made no difference in this matter. A Crown had no charms, a Court no pleasures (or none but what were low and tasteless) for him, whose heart panted and breathed after a diviner felicity, saying, *When shall I come and appear before God? In his presence is fulness of joy, at his right hand are pleasures for evermore.* The good man saith as *Job* (but not because broken with sorrows as he was) ⁱ *I would not live always---* the wicked man, *Let me never die, so I may always live in worldly ease and prosperity---* so different is the voice of Faith and Sense, of Grace and Nature.*

3. They

^e Gen. xlvii. 9. ^h Psal. xxxix. 10. ⁱ Job. vii. 16.

3. They were not without good hope of a part in the promised Reward. To have thought of heaven but as a place which they must not see, or seeing must not enter; of God but as one who had cast them off for ever, would have been inexpressibly sad and afflicting to souls that loved God as they did, and had *set their affections on things above*: but for this very reason, that they loved God supremely they could not justly entertain a suspicion, that they should be eternally banished from his presence; for this very reason, that the supposition of such a banishment, abstracting from other considerations, alarmed and terrified them, they might be assured that it would never be their lot. The ^k *Angles left their own habitation*, τὸ ἴδιον ἀνεκλήριον, their proper habitation, for so it was as long as they continued in their integrity; the purity of the abode suited that of their nature, which was no sooner corrupted by sin, but the place immediately cast them out. It may be said of all holy souls, that heaven is, though not their native, yet their proper region, to which therefore they as naturally ascend as a pure and active flame mounts upward. Upon the same account as the apostate spirits were thrown down from these celestial mansions they shall be received into them, filling up the room of those fallen angles, as the *Israelites* did of those nations,

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which

^k Jude. 6.

which the land spewed out when they had defiled it. So that you see a heavenly hope either actually accompanies a heavenly temper, or always ought to do it. Having thus considered the Faith of these holy men, which was the First thing proposed, let us inquire

II. What we are to understand by their *Dying in this Faith*. And why may not the expression intimate these following things? The constancy of their Faith---Its being a suitable and decent close of the life they had led---And that it was their main support in dying.

I. This expression of *their dying in Faith*, may be reasonably supposed to denote the constancy, both of their Faith itself which vanquished all the temptations that could be thrown in its way, and of their profession of it which held out to the last. They equally abhorred infidelity and hypocrisy, neither through error falling from the Faith, nor through cowardice basely deserting or disguising or denying it. In them Faith was a lively permanent Principle, which ceased not to exert its activity till they themselves gave up the ghost; and then, like those who shall be found alive at the last day, it did not so properly dye as was changed, putting on immortality under another form and name; for the object being present, what was *Faith* before

fore immediately commenced *Sight*. The ¹ *trial of their Faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried in the fire, was found unto praise and honour and glory.* Of such a Faith as this the house in our Saviour's Parable, that was built upon a Rock, is a proper emblem; ^m *The rains descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon the house, and yet it fell not, because it was founded on a rock. The Foundation of God, even his holy Covenant, which he had established with them, standeth sure; and to this they trusted, so that no storms could shake their Faith, no floods could quench their Love.*

The prosperity of wicked men, and the afflictions of the righteous, that deluge of impiety which had over-spread the world, and threatened its destruction, while the God of heaven kept silence, as if he was retired from the scene of action, and regarded not what was done here below; these and such like riddles that were fatal to the Faith of many others, were not so to theirs, who took the matter by the right handle; and instead of considering these things as Objections against the Providence of God, and consequently against a Future State, improved them as very good arguments for such a State, where God will set the affairs of his government in a clearer light, and effectually vindicate

¹ 1 Pet. i. 7.

^m Matt. vii. 25.

dicating his Perfections and Providence from all aspersions. A great many things conspired to betray and overthrow their Faith, as the number of bad examples which beset them on all hands, the prevalency of error, the corruption of their own nature, the blandishments of sense, the insinuations of company and acquaintance, the sophistry of Pretenders to Reason, and the confidence, the wit, and banter of profane scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, *Where is the promise of his coming? Whoever returned from this invisible world which you talk so much of? Shew us one risen from the dead and we will believe.* But in vain were all these mines and batteries, their Faith after all standing fixed and impregnable; as well it might, when it had not only the support of their natural notions concerning a world to come, but also of the power and love and faithfulness of God. They endured to the end, and were saved; were faithful to the death, and received a crown of life.

2. Their dying in Faith plainly enough hints that their death was but a suitable and decent close of the life they had led; it was all of a piece, and all regular, and they had before lived by Faithⁿ as they now die in it. Their death, as the last act of life, only finished the great work, and showed its unity and perfection. This was not the first
time

ⁿ Rom. i. 17.

time of their putting on this celestial armor; they always went clad in it, and, by the help of it, had been victorious in manifold encounters. By Faith they pleased God, cheerfully complied with the command to offer up their best loved comforts, chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of Sin for a season, because they had respect to the recompence of reward; they subdued kingdoms, overcame the world, and, which is yet greater, conquered their own lusts and passions, wrought righteousness, became heirs of the promises; and, in one word, obtained a good report of men, if they were not bad indeed, and of the truth also, which, in the inspired writings, hath transmitted their shining examples to the most distant Posterity. Many will say as *Balaam*, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his*; my death, but not my life. I would willingly enjoy my sinful pleasures as long as I can, and then try the virtue of Faith. And dost thou think, O vain man, that the privilege of dying in Faith is reserved for thee? Or that the Faith, which thou mayest have when thou comest to leave the world, is the Faith these good men died in? O do not thus deceive thyself to thy own perdition! True Faith is quite another thing than thou art apt to conceit it, implying such a preference of heavenly

venly things as it is impossible thou shouldst have, after thou hast minded none but earthly; such a taste for divine pleasures, such a rest and complacency in God, as can never, without a miracle, be found in souls, that, for a whole life together, have wallowed in impure and sensual delights. Such a change is not often, if ever, wrought in an instant. I shall only beg you to consider this further, that it must be very odd to think of begining a life of Faith a moment or two before you are to conclude it. To add no more,

3. Hereby is signified that Faith was their main support in dying, being able to make the same challenge as the Apostle *Paul*, and in his words (tho' they could not have understood them in the fulness of their meaning) *O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory?* And, with exultation, to add, as he does elsewhere, *I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the Faith; henceforth a crown of righteousness is laid up for me.* This made it to be no difficulty for them to leave the world, as *Abraham* his country and kindred, having so good a guide to conduct them; yet not, as he, to wander in unknown regions, but to enter into everlasting rest.

The shield of Faith will not only quench the fiery darts of Satan, but repel the ar-

rows

rows of Death too. Never is the worth of this grace so sensibly discerned, as in the strength and peace it communicates to the dying christian, whom (after it hath enabled him to surmount the hardships and trials of life) it many times elevates above the fears of death too; so that he is no more shocked at its approach than by that of an ordinary event; a sight much more pleasing to a judicious mind than a *Roman* triumph could be. When he is passing thro' the dark valley and shadow of death, Faith, like a ray from heaven, enlightens the gloomy path, and helps to behold the hills of salvation that lie beyond it. We here see the waters of *Jordan* divided again by Faith, and the soul march dauntless thro' to take possession of the promised reward. ° *Moses* was called up to *mount Nebo*, from thence to survey the *land of Canaan*, and then *to die in the mount*; as if, after this sight, he would die more contentedly: in like manner, the pious man beholding with an eye of Faith the much fairer inheritance in light, calmly resigns himself to the stroke of death.

Moses was to see *Canaan* at a distance, but never enter it, which would have made this proceeding look more like a punishment than a favour, if his generous and publick spirit had not given him an interest in what should befall the people of God in future ages, and his

° Deut. xxxii. 49, &c.

his Faith from the earthly *Canaan* had not raised his thoughts to the heavenly, into which he knew he should not be denied admission. O ravishing prospect! Unfading light! Rivers of pleasure! Mansions of rest! Crowns of glory! Bright and angelick hosts beholding the Almighty's face, celebrating his perfections and works, surrounding his throne, from whence he graciously smiles on the adoring multitude, and in every smile darts ineffable joy into their hearts! This is the place whither the spirits of the just immediately ascend, upon their release out of this sinful life! This the company with which they join! This their employment and happiness! And after the revolution of a few years (few compared to the ages of eternity) each Soul shall resume the Body, of which death dispossessed it, free from all its old infirmities, arrayed in new and surprizing beauty, and invested with the utmost perfection a Body is capable of.

The Terrors of death must flee before this thought, as the shades of the night before the rising day. We may say to such as go about to administer consolation upon any other principles but those of Faith, as *Job* did to his friends, *Miserable comforters are ye all.* Tell me not that to die is natural and unavoidable, a law that all must submit to sooner or later, whether they will or no—
A most wonderful comfort under the apprehensions

hensions of an impending calamity to know that it is inevitable! Tell me not that, of all human evils, Death is the only one, whose presence never incommodes any one, and which makes us uneasy only by its absence. This is putting me off with a piece of trifling wit, when I need something more solid, and exasperates, instead of healing, a wounded mind. For upon supposition there be another life after this, this applauded thought hath no manner of foundation; the Soul, which is the only thing sensible while the man lives, being no less sensible after death than before, and the Soul of a wicked man sensible of nothing but misery; and tho' Death should be such an evil as it is here described, it is but a thin and sorry fence this against the fears of it. The evils of life, if they are felt, argue sense and perception which is the foundation of happiness; while Death, together with the sense of itself, if it implies annihilation, destroys all capacity of pleasure or happiness too. * Tell me not again, that tho' the time of life appointed to all be short and irrevocable, yet it is in a man's power to extend his memory by virtuous deeds. If the Poet's God had nothing to offer more consolatory than this, I must say that his God is not as our God, who
only

* Stat sua cuique dies, breve & irreparabile tempus
Omnibus est vitæ; sed famam extendere factis,
Hoc virtutis opus. *Virg. Æneid. Lib. 10.*

only hath immortality, and, by his well-beloved Son Jesus Christ, hath given us the words of eternal life; who does not only encourage us with the promise that the just shall be had in everlasting remembrance, but that they themselves shall live for ever in a state of unconceivable perfection. And, in truth, unless I have some rational assurance of this, that I myself shall have a real, sensible, happy existence, it will yield me but little relief that my name is likely to be somewhat longer lived than this frail body; since if it should so happen that I am well spoken of by a few when I am no more, I shall know nothing of it, and be never the better for it, and so can have no enjoyment of the imaginary blessing but by way of anticipation. To these, and such like heathenish methods of encountering the terrors of Death may justly be applied those words of the Prophet *Isaiab*, *The covering is narrower than that a man can wrap himself in it.* Let who will please themselves with talking of a Philosophical Death, may I die like a Christian. Let them trust to natural Reason and Resolution, but, O Lord, do thou give me Faith! Let this angel comfort me in my dying agonies, and I matter them not. Faith will prop my languishing head, dispel the mists from my clouded eyes, quicken my feeble pulse, and revive my sinking spirits; the richest cordial in nature cannot compare with it.

When

When my strength and my heart fails me, this will be the strength of my heart, by assuring me, that God will be my portion for ever. O let me be but strong in Faith when my body lies weak and helpless, and dying! As my end approaches let me have brighter views, and more overflowing hopes of heavenly joys, and I defy the worst that death can do. I am ready to enter the list when God pleaseth, and shall write down my last day as that whereon I am to triumph.

And now to make a little use of what hath been delivered.

1. I infer the singular excellency of Faith. For, not to mention any other trial of it, it is abundantly enough that it will stand this last and greatest. Let the infidel bring his vaunted principles to the test, and see if they will bear it. Faith may pass for weakness and folly among some men, but they must give others leave to think it a point of the highest wisdom: nay, I will undertake to prove it so upon the grand principle of these men, *That there is no life to come.*

For argument's sake I suppose there is not; how will the account then stand between the believer and the unbeliever? Why, when they are dead they will both be upon a level, but not when they are dying. No, here the believer hath vastly the advantage; for, besides that the other, in spite of all his in-deavours to the contrary, cannot but have

some jealousies of a future reckoning, which will keep his mind pensive and anxious; his best, his only resort is annihilation, or the wretched hope that he shall be no more, that he shall intirely perish; which is just like a man's throwing himself into a rapid flood, from which there is no possibility of his geting out again, to avoid a cruel enemy that pursues him; he chuses Death in this form only, as less dreadful than falling into such merciless hands. This is the condition of the *free-thinker*, (as he loves to call himself) dismal you see at the best; while at the worst (I do not mean for the former) the *believer* hath the support of his Faith, which, if it were an error, is yet sufficient to scatter the fears of Death. But now, if there be another life, (and we may be as certain of it as of any thing which we cannot see) what then is become of our boaster? He is miserable by his own confession; while the believer, the good man, is beyond expression happy, compleatly and eternally happy. And would any one but a most egregious fool try such a dangerous experiment, and ingage in a game of hazard, at which he must stake all against nothing?

2. The examples of these antient servants of God should stir us up to an imitation of their Faith, both living and dying. Their Faith is indeed a great confirmation of ours, and accordingly this is the use which this sacred

sacred writer himself makes of what he had said, in the first verse of the following chapter; *Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us.* God hath had his witnesses in all ages of the world, in the earlier as well as the later, who have born their testimony to the wisdom of his ways, and the faithfulness of his promises, as he also hath testified of their gifts and graces, that they were sincere and well pleasing in his sight. This testimony of their lives is a considerable help to our Faith in these perilous times, and the testimony of their Death, perhaps, a still greater.

Let us do likewise, let us live as they did, that we may die like them. We have the advantage of them many ways. We cannot say, *that since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were*; the Messiah, or Christ, is since come, and hath told us all things, to whom we should look as the author and finisher of our Faith, who hath brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel, hath both enlarged our prospect, and made it more clear and distinct. ^p We see heaven opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, to animate his faithful combatants, and receive their spirits when commended

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into

^p John iv. 25. xi. 25. Heb. xii. 2. 2 Tim. x. 12.

into his hands. We know whom we believe, that he is able to keep what we commit unto him; *He is the resurrection and the life.*

In the *Gospel* of Christ we have most express promises of the heavenly country, and a kind of a map or delineation of it. In the *Blood* of Christ we have the price of the inheritance, a price equal in value to the possession purchased with it; insomuch, that be the expected blessedness never so great, and the expectant, in his own apprehensions, and in reality, never so unworthy of it, if he unfeignedly love Christ, he cannot reasonably doubt of his attaining it. In the *Resurrection* and *Ascension* of Christ we have an example of the resurrection and consummation of the just, *whose vile bodies he will fashion like to his glorious body, by that mighty power whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.* In the *Spirit* of Christ we have a most inestimable pledge and earnest of the glory promised. The church is blessed with larger effusions of the divine Spirit, and clearer manifestations of the divine will; besides the list of their primitive saints, we have a new roll of christian heroes, and by a long succession of excellent persons, before and since the Gospel, who have exhibited the truth in their lives, and sealed it with their dying breath, and sometimes with their blood, are silently reproached with our sloth, our worldliness, our pusillanimity and unbelief. O
Sirs,

Sirs, let us be ambitious of joining ourselves to this glorious army, headed by Christ the captain of our salvation, and follow their Faith, remembering the end of their conversation.

Of this number was your *Deceased Pastor*; *He died in Faith*, and we have ground to hope is now inheriting the promises. The last words he spake, or aimed to speak, were those in the close of the fourth chapter of the first Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, *Comfort one another with these words*, namely, *That ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him: for this we say unto you, that we that are alive, and remain to the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them that are asleep; for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

A great disorder of body made the latter part of his life, as less comfortable to himself, so less useful to others, than, I am persuaded, it would otherwise have been. The soul, let it be never so well disposed, can but badly perform its part, when the body

hangs upon it like a dead weight, clouds its lustre, and impairs its vigor. I will not say that *charity* obliges us to make allowances in such cases, since it is but a piece of justice that we owe worthy men, to overlook their decays for the sake of those good fruits, which the world and the church reaped from their labours and examples, in their more flourishing time—His ministerial qualifications will be acknowledged by those that knew him, and are competent judges, to have exceeded the common rate. To good and natural abilities he had added a considerable stock of acquired learning, which he amassed together with unwearied pains and diligence; and tho' it may be said that he was *covetous* in getting knowledge, (yet contrary to what is observed in other cases, where *covetousness* is a vice) he was altogether as free in communicating it. His happy talents for the instructing and forming of *Youth* committed to his care, and the delight he took in this work, while he could delight much in any thing, many, I hope, recollect with a grateful pleasure—his treasure of scripture knowledge, out of which, as a scribe well instructed to the kingdom of heaven, he brought forth things new and old—his serious pathetic and judicious way of preaching, equally adapted to those of higher and of meaner capacities, you of this *Congregation* had too long the benefit of not to observe; and, give me

me leave to add, too long to be excusable, if you made no improvement under them.

Among the virtues of our departed Friend, I cannot forbear making particular mention of *three* or *four*, both because he visibly excelled in them, and they are equally fit to be proposed to the imitation of all. The virtues I mean, are the simplicity and openness of his temper—his contempt of the world—his unenvious, catholic and christian spirit—and his active zeal in doing good. These are all most amiable qualities, (*graces* we may call them, when they are the fruits of Faith, as in this servant of God) and, I am sorry to say it, are more valuable, like some other things, for being rare. He was an *Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile*, without artifice and design, both in his preaching and conversation, in which, as St. Paul was his pattern, so he copied him very exactly; *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.* And in the fourth chapter of the same Epistle, verse 2. *We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

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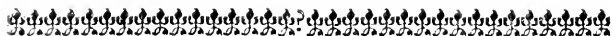
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In an intimate acquaintance of many years, I cannot call to mind any one instance that discovered an inclination in him to methods of *tricking* and *deceit*. If it be objected, that a man may have too much *simplicity* for this world; my answer is, better so than have too little for another. He had as hearty, and thorough an indifference to the world, as most I have known. Did St. *Paul* in his appeal to the elders of *Ephesus* publicly declare that *he had coveted no man's silver or gold*? Our friend could have done the same, knowing no other use of money, than to supply the real occasions of life, and to expend in charity and beneficence.

How free was he from that base, unmanly, unjust, and yet natural, passion of *envy*? Easy to hear others commended, and pleased to have an occasion of praising them himself. In this, I must confess, I have not often met with his equal. He was far from confining christianity to a *party*, as the manner of some is; he had larger and juster notions of it; and tho' he would *call no man master upon earth*, he was ready to call and account all those his *brethren*, that appeared to be embarked in the same common design of promoting the Gospel of Christ, and saving souls. This, indeed, seemed to be his chief delight; he served God with his spirit in the Gospel of his Son. We have reason to think that as long as his health would

would give leave, he was never better pleased, than when he was about his master's business and imitating that divine person, who went about doing good, and made it his meat to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work. But, alas, after having for some time been preparing us for his loss, God hath at length taken him from us, almost in the midst of his days; so that ye, among whom he went preaching the kingdom of God, and all of us, shall see his face no more. It remains therefore, that the things which ye have learned and received, and heard, and seen in him, agreeable to our common standard of *Faith* and *practice*, ye remember and do; that so, tho' he be dead, and in his grave, the seed he sowed may not die with him, but spring up, and bring forth fruit to eternal life.





*The Thoughts and Purposes of men
broken off by Death.*

A

S E R M O N,

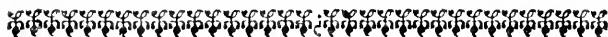
Occasioned by the Death of

Mr. Samuel Darch,

I N T H E

XXII. Year of his Age.

1725.





S E R M O N V.

The Purposes of Men broken off
by Death.

J O B XVII. II.

*My days are past, my purposes are
broken off, even the thoughts of
my heart.*

THESE words signify the apprehensions of afflicted *Job*, that the end of his time was approaching, and with that the period of all his Thoughts and Designs with regard to this world. That by *his Days*, which he speaks of *as past*, he does not mean only the days of his prosperity, but of his life, is evident from his complaint in the first verse, *My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me*: and so again from the thirteenth verse to the end of the Chapter. *If I wait, the grave is my house. I have made my bed in the darkness. I have said to corruption, thou art my father, to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister, &c.* He thought, (though the event shewed him to be

be mistaken) that Death was just at hand, which, as it would be the conclusion of all his miseries, so would likewise defeat him of all the schemes and purposes he once pleased himself with, and the hopes which, in case of longer life, he might be tempted to entertain of brighter days behind. If there be any difference between Purposes and Thoughts in the Text, it is this, that though every Purpose implies Thought, yet every Thought cannot be called a Purpose. A man's Purposes relate to his own actions, to this or that which he intends to do; his Thoughts are employed about the various events that may befall him, things out of his power, as well as things which he conceives to be in it; as to all which, he is full of thought, when he looks upon them as affecting his chief interest and happiness. Perhaps, the original word for *Thoughts* (which literally translated signifies the possessions of the heart) hath a more particular regard to the hopes of men; our hopes giving us a kind of anticipated enjoyment of the things hoped for, which, how long soever it be before we really possess them, yea, whether we ever possess them or not, may be reckoned among the possessions of the heart, or imagination: the mind seizeth upon such things as its own property, and rejoiceth in them as if they were present. So that, the words afford us this following Doctrine, which, though
a most

a most obvious and important truth, is not so duly weighed and considered as it ought to be, namely that

Death puts an end to all the Thoughts and Purposes of mortal men.

Here I shall endeavour to shew,

- I. What these Thoughts and Purposes of mortal men usually are.
- II. How Death puts an end to them.
- III. What Improvement we ought to make of this point.

I. I shall briefly consider what these Thoughts and Purposes of mortal men usually are. The superiority of man to other living creatures here below appears, among many things in this, that while they are confined to the present moment, having no perception but of what immediately strikes their senses, he interests himself in times past and to come; running his Thoughts backward and forward to an indeterminate extent: his mind, which is an image of the Creator, hath a kind of infinity in its capacities, its desires and imaginations, diffusing itself over the boundless dimensions of time and space. This, by the way, is a plain argument that both the past and future time concern us after another manner than they do the beasts of the field; since our Maker hath given us faculties for conversing with past and future things, which they have not.

It

It is the office of Conscience to take a review of our actions past, and, according as they have been good or bad, agreeable to the obligations of duty, or otherwise, to pronounce a suitable judgment upon them: as it is further the part of Prudence, from the observations we have made of past events, to frame such rules as may be of use to us in our future conduct; avoiding all those actions and methods of life that we have found prejudicial to the repose of our minds, and our true interest, and pursuing others which we have experienced, or seen, to have a contrary effect. And as the past, so the future time falls within every man's province. Nor is this our fault, that we meddle with things future, or stretch our cares beyond their proper bounds, since being designed for immortality, that is, to live for ever, and to live for ever happy or miserable, answerable to our behaviour in a state of trial, we cannot be blamed if we are thoughtful about this grand event, and solicitous to provide for a state of life which will be unalterable. It is not often that we exceed here.

Our unhappiness and folly is, that we think too little about a life to come, and too much about what is to come; or rather may be, or not be to come, of this life. Instead of carrying our thoughts and designs too far into futurity, we do not, in some sense, carry them far enough; we generally limit them
to

to this frail body, this vain world, and momentary life; or, which is not a whit less silly, to an imaginary existence that hath no connection with this life or another. And here, indeed, we are too busy both for our own peace, and that of others too; taken up with the thoughts of what we shall eat and drink, and where withal we shall be cloathed; with forming projects and designs for a happy life (according to our mistaken notions of happiness) and about a thousand things, which will never exist any where but in our own brains.

It may be proper to consider the *Thoughts* and *Purposes* of men a little distinctly, without scrupulously following the order of the Text. I chuse to begin with *Thoughts*.---The inward thought of too many is, not only that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations, but that they themselves have many days and years to come, a great part of their appointed time upon earth, unwilling to suppose it in the least probable that they must die this Month, or this Year; or when they are entered upon another, that that may prove their last; and thus do they suffer their time to slide away, never making a good use of the consideration of their *last Day*, because they put it far from them, viewing it through that end of the prospective, which represents

sents it at a much greater distance than really it is.

This is more especially the way of the Young, in whose account the thoughts and meditations of Death are utterly unseasonable. Let those think of Death who can take no pleasure in life, who have the snow of age upon their heads, and their blood frozen in their veins; or, by some hopeless disease and business of the world, are bid to prepare for their approaching end; as for their parts, they are but just entered upon the world, and find something else to do than to think presently of going out of it again; they are scarce sat down to the banquet, and will not spoil the merriment by idle fears, that they may be obliged to rise, before they are half satisfied. The world courts them with its pleasures, and they are now in an age to enjoy them; they are in the prime and vigor of their days, and may be allowed to promise themselves longer life, when it is no more than the health and strength of their constitutions promise them. They live in a house new built, and, it may be, stronger than ordinary, and why then should they fright themselves with an imagination that it may fall upon their heads, and bury them in its ruins? It is true, there is no house secure if an earthquake or raging fire should happen; notwithstanding which, the owner of a house that is well built, and in
good

good repair, quietly enjoys the profit, or the pleasure of it without distracting himself about the possibility. Foolish man, to take refuge in such a comparison, as if the accidents that lie in wait for mens lives did not occur a thousand times oftner than those, which overthrow or consume their habitations. Surely the materials of a building are not nigh so brittle as those of a human body, nor does its continuance depend upon such a multitude of nice and exquisite parts, either of which failing, the whole structure falls to the ground. Rather therefore when we are talking of life, let us resemble it to a light and slender vessel, sailing on a dangerous sea; perhaps it is finely painted; and makes a gawdy show, and, for some time, hath a prosperous course, dancing upon the calm ocean, or flying before the wind, when of a sudden, it strikes against an unseen rock, or meets with a tempest that overwhelms it in the deep. Is it not strange now that we should rely upon so weak a bottom? Youth by this means deceives the unwary possessor; and health, which in itself is an unspeakable blessing, becomes a most fatal snare. The comparison of a house, before mentioned, fails too in another respect. The house thou makest thy boast of is not thine, neither hast thou a term of years in it; and therefore let the house be what it will, since thou art liable to be turned out of it at the pleasure

sure of the lord, it is a great folly to make as sure of thy continuing in it, as if there was a contract between thee and the proprietor.

You will say, there are those who live to a much greater age than you have yet attained to. But how many more fall short of the term you propose? Life is a kind of Lottery, wherein, for one Prize, there is a great number of Blanks; and each person having but a single Ticket to depend on, what a vanity is it to boast ourselves of a Prize; which, it is many to one odds, will not fall to us. In reason therefore we ought to place ourselves among the generality of mankind, who tarry but a short time on the Stage; whereas, our practice is to pass over the examples of a short life, as little concerning us, though so numerous; and fixing our eye on a few rare instances to the contrary, to work ourselves into a belief that we likewise shall be Exceptions from the general Rule.

Another Thought to which men indulge, more especially in the morning of life, is of the happy times they shall see, the delightful scenes that lie before them, the prosperity and success that will attend them, and crown all their wishes; how much their circumstances will be mended, their wealth increased, their estate and their name enlarged, and, with these, their ability of compass-
ing

ing all their desires. They first think these things may be; next hope; and presently after assure themselves that they will; as if their time was in their own hands, and the whole train of events that shall befall them in that time. Not that men are forbidden to hope the best concerning their condition, if so be they prepare for the worst. Life unanimated with hope, would be a dull and heavy entertainment, a burthen instead of a pleasure, especially under great afflictions; for which reason they, that are exercised with such, are permitted to hope that they shall see the clouds blow over, and enjoy a calmer and a brighter season. This, without doubt, is lawful, in case they do not limit the Providence of God as to the time and manner of their deliverance, nor depend upon an alteration in their condition as a thing certain; nor make the hope of it their main stay and refreshment in adversity.

He that would be inconsolable, were it not for the hope he hath that his troubles will end before his life, shews himself to be a stranger to the Principles of the Gospel, and to divine consolations. But what Reason and Religion condemn is, the fond imagination that our cup will perpetually overflow with joy and pleasure, giving ourselves up to a fantastick dream of Paradise upon earth, and forgetting that we are sinful, mutable, and mortal. This argues a sensual heart, that

hath no taste, no notion, of any other than a worldly felicity. O how tempting doth the world appear to a youthful fancy! How charming are all its prospects! Most Young Persons, that have a provision made for them, pass their lives under a kind of enchantment, counting upon nothing else but ease and pleasure, and enjoyment of themselves, and of the world.

Objects viewed through a coloured glass appear of the same colour as the glass. Thus life, and the things of life are as the imagination of the man that beholds them. To a dark and gloomy imagination, the world hath nothing in it that is joyous and delightful, a perpetual cloud dwells upon the face of it; while the gay, the sanguine imagination (and such the imaginations of Young Persons generally are) makes all things about us look gay and smiling. Ah flattering Youth, how many thousands hast thou undone by thy soothing softness, thy romantick hopes and expectations! Wisdom cries aloud, *it is all delusion*, but not loud enough to be heard in the noise and tumult of the passions. Well therefore might the Royal Preacher pronounce, *That ^a Youth is Vanity*, vain are its hopes and imaginations; so vain that the visions of one in a delirium are scarcely vainer. And if it be true of man in general that *^b he walketh in a vain shew*, much more

^a Eccies. xi. 10.

^b Psal. xxxix. 6.

more is it so of the Young. Youth is vain in another respect, or in the same sense that all things here below are vain. It frequently deceives the great expectations which it had raised. If a Young Person hath, by his good temper and behaviour, engaged the affections of his acquaintance, and bids fair to be a blessing in his Place, his Parents and Kindred are presently apt to promise themselves a great deal of comfort in him; the Poor think what a good master he will prove, and all that know him how useful he is likely to be in every relation. Vain hopes, which are in a moment blasted by Death! He dies, and together with his own thoughts, there is an end of all the pleasing hopes which others built on his life.

These then are some of the thoughts of men, who commonly reckon upon a long life, and that they shall spend it all in pleasure.

And what now are their Purposes? As may be expected, much like their thoughts; as uncertain in their foundation, as foolish in their nature, and fruitless in their issue. Our Purposes do either concern another life, or are circumscribed by the present. As for those of our Purposes that terminate on a life to come, God knows they are few enough, such as we are forced upon, and, which is worse, are seldom in haste to make good. If conscience will not let us alone without it,

why then, for peace sake, we give it a few good words and fair promises; and commonly they prove no more than words. When we promise, we resolve to act a wiser part, to apply ourselves in good earnest to the pleasing and serving of God, and the care of our immortal souls. But when is this to be? Alas, we either fix no time, or a time so distant that it is much if ever we arrive to it; or so improper (as for instance, a time of sickness) that we are not like to be in any manner of fitness for the work which we have allotted it.

There are those, who intend to be public blessings by their Zeal, their Liberality and Charity; they will relieve the indigent, encourage the worthy, and generously contribute to the promoting of a good cause; but then this is not to be till they have discharged the expence of certain Undertakings, and have made large preparations for it, though already they want nothing but the heart. After this manner do we deal with the few scattered resolves which we take for the repose of our consciences. And it were well if we were as slack and dilatory in executing some other Purposes of a contrary nature. Too often the lusts and passions of men put them upon wicked designs and enterprizes, in accomplishing which they are as quick and vigorous as in respect of the former they are slow. Ah, why should we misplace our
activity;

activity; and have our hearts, which ought to burn with zeal for God and the good of our fellow-creatures, fully set in us to do evil? Other projects there are of an indifferent nature, of which some men receive a swarm into their heads, and hug themselves in the imagination that there is no danger or harm in them: they plant, they build, they pull down, they alter this and that, they frame schemes for themselves and families. But now, though these contrivances are in themselves indifferent, they may yet be of pernicious consequence through the abuse of them, as shall be shewn in the Application. Of all our projects those are most unaccountably absurd, which set by matters of present and necessary concern, to take in a long hereafter, as if life were not measured by Years, but by ages--*Vitæ summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam*--Men send their view into distant futurities, and over-look the precipice that lies just before them; which brings me in the next place to consider,

II. How Death puts at end to all our Thoughts and Purposes.

Death doth not extinguish our thinking faculty, it is impossible it should; its empire reacheth no further than the body, which it dissolves and crumbles into its native dust: the soul is of a nobler nature,

as well as of a diviner original, and though it makes use of the organs and members of the body as instruments to act by, can yet think, and know, perceive pleasure and pain, be happy or miserable, without them. The flesh is little more than the garment of the mind. We must not therefore imagine that Death is a state of absolute forgetfulness and inactivity. Nor further, must we understand what is advanced in the doctrine of Death's putting an end to human Purposes, as if our useful and pious designs, which are left unfinished only for want of opportunity to reduce them into act, were perfectly lost at Death. The good man may come short of his aim, but not of his reward. As no virtuous action of his, not the least service he does God and Religion shall be overlooked, so neither any commendable design, which, by that God who calleth things that be not, as if they were, shall be placed to his account after the same manner as what is actually accomplished. ^c *Abraham* is said to have offered up his Son *Ishac*, because he that knows the heart, knew he would have done it, if by his Angel he had not prevented him; for which cause he accepts of the intended Sacrifice, and swears by himself *that in blessing he would bless him*, that is, he would surely and exceedingly bless him. In like manner, Death many times intercepts the Purposes

^c Heb. vii. 11.

poses of a devout and zealous heart, but instead of intercepting the recompence doth only hasten it---To the question, How then are we to understand the Doctrine? I answer,

1. Death puts a stop to the execution of all our Thoughts and Purposes in this world, of whatsoever kind they are. The designs of men, when Death comes, are like a building which is begun upon a large and expensive plan, but will never be finished. ^d *His breath goeth forth, he returneth to the earth, in that very day his Thoughts perish*; all his Thoughts and Contrivances for the present life, or about such things as were to have been done in this life. ^e *The dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward, for the memory of them is forgotten: also their love and their hatred and their envy are now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun*; what is done under the sun, or upon this earth, is no more to them than if it was done in a place which they never knew. And so again in the tenth verse of the same Chapter, *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the Grave whether thou goest*. No, it is all silence and oblivion there, and all beyond is fixed and unchangeable. ^f *I shall behold*

^d Psalm cxlvi. 4.

^e Eccles. ix. 5, 6.

^f I'ai. xxxviii. 11, 12.

behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. Mine age is departed, and is removed from me like a shepherd's tent. I have cut off, like a weaver, my life: and when life is once cut off, there is no piecing it again. The tree whose fruits do not ripen kindly one year, may be more fortunate and useful the next, and with loaden branches more than pay for the last year's barrenness; not so man, who hath but one Season for Fruit; sometimes longer, sometimes shorter, and knows no second Spring. His Purposes and Hopes are like the blossoms on the tree, or immature fruit; Death not only nips and withers these, but fells the tree that it never bears any more. ² *There is hope of a tree if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and the tender branch thereof will not cease; but man dieth and wasteth away, yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? And where all his intended Regulations, and plausible Schemes? Buried with him in one Grave.*

2. Death so intirely destroys the Thoughts and Resolutions of men to prepare for a future state, which they might have put in execution, but never did, that they will no way profit them in another life. Will good works cloath the naked; or fill the hungry? No more will good, but ineffective wishes save a guilty perishing soul. There is

² Job xiv. 7, 10.

is no virtue in resolving well, without doing what is in the power of our hands to do; and as for all such empty resolutions Death will scatter them as the chaff is dispersed and driven away by the tempest, their place shall no more be found, they shall not be admitted in plea at the dreadful tribunal, but rather serve to prove our guilt, and aggravate our sentence; since by resolving upon the amendment of our lives, we plainly confess, that we think it our duty to amend them, and are therefore inexcusable in not doing it. The Sum is, the man who is never actually good, must never hope to be actually happy.

3. Death sometimes breaks off the Thoughts and Purposes of men of a sudden, and unexpectedly. Like a thread that hath a weak or rotten place in it, life snaps asunder before they are aware of it. This hath been the case of some, who have made no little noise in the world. I shall content myself with producing two instances of it, one out of sacred, the other from common History.

Belshazzar will be an eternal example of what I am now proving, as you have his history in the fifth Chapter of *Daniel*, where you read of *his making a great feast to a thousand of his Lords, and with his Princes, his Wives, and his Concubines, drinking wine in the golden and silver vessels, which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple*
at

at Jerusalem, praising his Gods of gold and silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. Thus did he lift up himself against the Lord of Heaven, and refuse to glorify the God in whose hand his breath was, and whose were all his ways; he prided himself in his power and greatness, and thought his mountain so strong that it could not be moved. With good reason might it be said of such a Laughter that it was mad; and of such Mirth what doth it? For in the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over-against the candlestick, upon the plaister of the wall of the King's Palace--*MENE, MENE, TEKEL UPHARSIN*--God hath numbered thy Kingdom and finished it, &c. And in that night was Belshazzar King of the Caldeans slain. Read this, and (as he did,) tremble. Though no hand writing appear on the wall, yet know your days are numbered, and may be now drawing to a close.

Julius Cæsar shall be the other Instance. The * Historian having enumerated several of the great things which he was revolving in his mind, such as the repairing and beautifying the City of *Rome*, inlarging the Empire, reforming the Civil Law, and the like, adds, *Talia agentem et meditantem mors prævenit*.---while he was meditating and forecasting these things Death prevented him, and this by a most surprizing blow: this ambitious

* Suetonius.

bitious man, this idol of the multitude, one minute presiding in the senate, the next weltering in his blood. Persons in the lower stations of life, not liable to such violent and tragical ends, are not exempted from unforeseen turns and changes. Their designs, inconsiderable as they are in themselves, and when compared with those of men in high places, are yet considerable to them, and when cut off by an untimely Death, occasion the same mournful reflections among those of their own rank and condition. What a sad disappointment is Death both to them and their friends! They looked for light, and behold darkness; night rushes in upon them at once, overtakes their day of life in the beginning or middle of its course, and so closes up the scene for ever. But as these things are too plain to need much enlargement, let us proceed,

- III. To consider the improvement we ought to make of this point. And, O what a change should it produce in our Thoughts and Purposes! What a mighty, what a constant influence should it have upon them, to consider that Death puts an end to them all as to this world. Indeed, were we to live always in this world, and never to be judged; or were there no other world besides this, were we never to die, or to die as the beasts do, without the least probable expectation

tion of an after-life, we should then have no great occasion to be solicitous about our imaginations and designs; any further than as prudence should restrain us from such as were hurtful to ourselves, and humanity and common justice from those that were hurtful to others. With the exception of such foolish or mischievous thoughts, we might freely abandon ourselves to all others, and regard nothing else but the amusing our minds, and gratifying our inclinations.

Upon the supposition now made, it would be our wisdom to study our diversion and pleasure; this alone making our designs accountable enough to our reason, that we were to give no account of them to a higher tribunal; there would be no harm then in spending our years as a tale, or as a dream, so it was but a pleasant one. But the case is quite otherwise than it is here put. As certainly as we now live, we must all die; and as certainly as we die, we must live again; yea, as to one, and that the chief part of us, shall not cease to live, but exist in a separate state, where we shall reap the fruits of our wise, or foolish, our virtuous, or vitious conduct in the body. And who sees not that this sets things in quite another view? So that what was justifiable on the former foot, cannot be so esteemed upon this. Since Death implies the destruction of all
our

our Designs and Resolutions in the manner before explained, we should entertain none but such as are innocent and reasonable; we should exercise a great deal of caution even as to these, that what is innocent and reasonable in itself, do not become otherwise through our fault; and, finally, as to our good, especially our religious Purposes, we should not postpone and delay them.

I. We should entertain none but innocent and reasonable Thoughts and Purposes. By innocent ones, I mean such as have nothing of *moral evil* in them; not necessarily interfering with the commands of the first or second table, with the duties of piety we owe our maker, of justice and charity that we owe our fellow-creatures, or of sobriety and temperance that we owe to ourselves. When I say that they ought to be *reasonable*, my meaning is, that they should be such as suit our birth and education, our state and circumstances of life, our faculties and opportunities, and rational prospects. ^h*We must not exercise ourselves in great matters, or in things too high for us; things not in our sphere, and beyond our line, that lie too remote in time; or out of our reach; or such as are impracticable, and afford no probable advantage if we succeed in them. It is a part of the character, which the Historian draws of a very bad man,* that his*

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^h Psal. cxxx. 1.

* *Vastus animus immoderata incredibilia, nimis a'ta semper cupiebat. Sallust, Catal.*

vaſt ſoul was always aiming at things immoderate, incredible and too lofty. Do not, ſaith another, † let thy hopes rove after things immortal; the changing year, and flying hour admoniſh thee to be wiſer; what is immortal can never be brought within the limits of mortal life, nor what implies a long duration within the bounds of a ſhort life; though if we remove the ſcene into another life, it is certain our ſouls cannot ſoar too high, nor extend their hopes too far. Such idle fooliſh projects as thoſe I have now deſcribed, will be like ſhooting at the moon, or at game that is not worth looking after. I believe there is not one of us, who would willingly have Death ſurprize him thus imployed, ingaged in criminal or chimerical undertakings. Is this a poſture, a circumſtance, for a reaſonable and immortal creature to be found in? Is it thus we would go out of the world, having our heads and hearts filled with wild imaginations, evil intentions, and ſhameful affections.

2. It is our wiſdom and duty to exerciſe a great deal of caution even with regard to our innocent and reaſonable Purpoſes, that what is innocent and reaſonable in itſelf, may not become otherwiſe through ſome faulty circumſtance attending it. Our thoughts may be innocent enough in their own nature, but we

† *Immortalia ne ſperes, monet, annus, et alium,
Quæ rapit hora diem. Hor.*

we shall be far from innocent, if we suffer them to ingross the whole attention of our minds, and have no room left for the more important concerns of religion. It is altogether reasonable that we should consult measures for the welfare of the body, and of the present life, the body being a part of ourselves, and this life of our intire existence; but if our concern be only, or chiefly for the body and the present life, it is extremely unreasonable. We should preserve some equitable proportion between our merely innocent Purposes, and those that are laudable and virtuous, that all, or almost all, our Purposes may not be such as reason barely tolerates, singly taken, but such as it approves in respect of their number, and, as to their usefulness, even requires.

A reasonable creature cannot be said to think and purpose reasonably, if his Thoughts and Purposes are not imployed about some worthy end of life, such as the Glory of God, and serviceableness in his proper place and station; and do not, in their final result, look towards a future everlasting world, since there is such a world, and we are designed for it. Again, we may not only be faulty in not rightly proportioning our Thoughts, but in making too sure of the issue, or putting the peace and quiet of our souls upon it. We think, and project, but with whom, I pray, is the disposal of all? We

are ready to say, we will do this, or that, or the other thing, not reflecting that there is one above us, whose negative will be too hard for most peremptory resolutions. We depend upon such and such an event to our designs, and cannot bear to think of their having any other. Fools that we are, to forget that Death like an unpassable gulph, may lie between us and the object we level at. And why then should we be confident of any future event, or disturb ourselves about it? Both are equally contradictory to reason, since nothing in this world is in our power or worth so much of our care.

3. Since Death for ever stops the execution of our Thoughts and Purposes, let us be advised not to defer the execution of our good resolves, especially those that enter into our preparation for another world, and are necessary to it. Let nothing prevail with us to put off these, no, not for a Day or an Hour. *Trust not the future, but improve the present*, though but an indifferent saying in the mouth of the Poet,* is a very good one, when turned to a christian sense. With this agrees *David's* practice, ⁱ *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies: I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments.* Our conscience will tell us this was wisely done, whether we will
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* *Carpe diem quam minimum credula postero.* *Hor.*

ⁱ *Psal.* cxix. 60.

own it or no. And why then should we not imitate him herein, not only think on our ways, but reform them, not only resolve to keep God's commandments, but do as we resolve? Some time or other we will take care of our souls, and, by repentance and a holy life, secure the favour of God. There wants nothing in this resolution to make it a wise one, but by its being more determinate. Some time or other, is next to no time. Resolve therefore to set about this great work immediately; lose no more time, while thou art debating when thou shalt turn to God, Death may step in, and decide the foolish question. To Day you will not; to Morrow you shall not be able. O Sinner, why so inconsiderate! What must be done, why wilt thou not do it presently? Is it too soon to make sure of happiness, of escaping an eternal hell, and enjoying an eternal heaven? But canst thou be certain that another time will not be too late? Let me particularly address myself to the Young; both my subject and the sad occasion demand it of me. Be persuaded for once to break through an established custom. I own it hath been an old custom, perhaps as old as the world, for Young Persons to deliver themselves up to their passions, their sensual desires and inclinations, and to forget God, and neglect their Soul and Eternity: but sure I am let the custom be never so old, it is a very bad

one, and I would fain have you to be exceptions to it. The text supplies you with a most powerful motive to early religion, it is your own fault if it be not effectual; that it may, you should seriously lay it to heart, and beg of God to imprint it on your minds. If Death overtakes you, when least expected, you will say as *Job* in the text does; and as that Young Person, whose obsequies we lately solemnized, could have done, *My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart.* That this thought may make the deeper impression, I shall intreat you to consider well those two or three things, with which I shall conclude.

1. Let me beg you to consider the uncertainty of life, ^k *which is but a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.* Experience shews that you are not too young to die, and the word of God, that you are not too young to be judged, and therefore you are not too young to be religious. You should not boast of to-morrow, and trifle away the present time, *because you know not what a Day may bring forth.* Time is now travelling with the Death of millions, Kings and People, Princes and Judges of the earth, Young Men and Maidens, Old Men and Children; and, before another evening close, may bring forth thine. The world

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^k Jam. iv. 14. Prov. xxvii. 1.

whose character is fully drawn into those few words of the Apostle, *hateful and hating one another*, without all hopes of redemption from thence ; this, this must be your inevitable portion. If you are wise, you will not stick a moment at sacrificing a few youthful lusts, to avoid a state of misery, which you should tremble to think of. To add no more.

3. Think of the vast advantage of being fully determined for a life of sobriety and godliness in your younger years; of making a right choice at first, and being fixed in that choice. Besides, it is preventing many errors in life, together with numberless troubles and perplexities, which unavoidably attend all who, throwing off the gentle yoke of religion, put themselves into the power of their passions; besides this privilege of early piety, it is the foundation of unspeakable satisfaction and pleasure. The moderation of the Young Person, in the pursuit and enjoyment of sensual delights, is amply rewarded with pleasures of a much nobler kind, not so tumultuous and violent perhaps, but infinitely more sweet and permanent. Religion will give you the possession and enjoyment of yourselves, gain you the secret esteem of all, and the love and friendship of the wise and good; and which is more than all, the approbation of the great God. He that hath not God for the guide of his Youth, will wander and be in continual

tinual fear and danger of falling among thieves, or down some fatal precipice ; so necessary is religion by way of preservative from the many dangers, that encompass you in the days of your youth ; and it is no less lovely than necessary, lovely in all, but more particularly in the young ; like health which, though agreeable in every part of life, is attended with a bloom and vigor in youth, which it wants in old age.

Religion will render you useful in life ; or if God, should see fit to call you out of the world, before you have acted your designed part in it, will procure you a great deal of hope, and comfort in Death. And here indeed is the main trial. In that war, from which there is no discharge, religion will be of singular service to you ; here it triumphs, here it appears to its advantage, by quieting and supporting the soul in that last distress ; not only teaching submission, but enabling the soul to practise it, inspiring courage and confidence ; or, at worst, bringing the vessel safe into the haven, though tost with storms. The wonderful patience with which, I am informed, our *Young Friend* deceased bore his uncommon pains, his calm resignation of himself to the will of God, his tender and pious exhortations to his *Brothers*, and grateful acknowledgement of the care of his *Parents* in his education, seem to argue that he was no stranger to the power of reli-

religion, and the operations of the divine Spirit ; which cannot but be ground of much satisfaction to the *Parents* and *Relations*.

I shall conclude with my wishes and prayers, that you would hearken to the opinion and advice of your *Friends* and *Intimates*, when they have been leaving this world, and standing upon the brink of another ; at which time men have right notions of things, if ever they have so. We are all of us, God knows, too apt to slight the most friendly *Admonitions* of the *Living* ; but methinks, we should pay some regard to the *Words* of the *Dying*. Let us think of the Deaths of our Acquaintance ; let us think seriously of our own ; and live now as we shall wish we had done when we come to die.





Death abolished by JESUS CHRIST.

A

Funeral Sermon

F O R

Mr. SAMUEL MULLINS,

Who died at

T A U N T O N,

I N T H E

XVII. Year of his Age.

1727.





T O

Mrs. MULLINS.

MADAM,

*T*HERE may be some satisfaction, under a private Affliction, in thinking that others suffer with us, but I doubt very little support. The satisfaction in this case, ariseth from the nature of human Passions, which are fond of justifying themselves, and consequently give us a sort of pleasure amidst all the trouble and uneasiness which they occasion, when they have this to plead for themselves, that the Object was deserving, and is so acknowledged by persons less interested than we are. But still, how is this a relief against our sorrows, that they appear to be too well grounded? On this account, there are no methods for calming the thoughts and passions of the heart, like those of Religion; as there is no Religion, tho' believed to be true, that hath so many and powerful topicks of Consolation as the Christian. All required to make us feel the mighty efficacy of these consolations in Christ, is the knowledge of our having a part in them,
grounded

grounded on the consciousness of our sincerity; and applying the mind to the serious consideration of them, till it is possessed of their just meaning, and sees their infinite weight and value.

They that know the heart of a Parent, will easily apprehend, that the loss of a Beloved Child is no small Trial; and that of an Only Son, in the Spring of his Days, and with the lovely Blossoms of his Wisdom, Goodness, and Piety upon him, still greater. And yet, even this trial is not so great, but that the comforts which flow from the glorious discoveries of the Gospel, its precious Promises and its divine Assistances, are more than equal to it.

That You may not be a stranger to these heavenly Supports; and may, in a particular manner, experience the force of the Argument handled in the following Discourse, which had not been published, but at your repeated request, shall be the Prayer of,

MADAM,

Your most Affectionate Friend

and obliged Humble Servant,

Taunton, April
17, 1727.

HENRY GROVE.



S E R M O N VI.

Death abolished by JESUS CHRIST.

2 T I M. I. 10.

---Who hath abolished Death---

C H R I S T I A N I T Y had hardly ever a more bitter enemy than the Apostle *Paul* before his Conversion, or an abler and more zealous advocate than he proved himself afterwards. To what shall we ascribe this surprizing difference in the sentiments and behaviour of the same man? His first Conversion was owing to a miracle; his extraordinary activity and resolution in the following course of his ministry, were the effect of rational conviction, joined with the warmth of his natural temper. It was *the excellency of the knowledge of Christ that made him count all things else but loss in comparison of it.* He, in this Chapter, exhorts his Son *Timothy* not to be ashamed of the testimony of *their*

their Lord, ver. 8. withal declaring, that he himself was not, ver. 12. whatever reproaches and hardships he happened to suffer for it; well satisfied of its being the most glorious cause in the whole world. Their *Master* was their *Saviour*; all those *Purposes of Grace*, which lay concealed in the bosom of the Father before the world began, ver. 9. were made manifest by his appearing, who hath abolished *Death*, and brought *Life and Immortality to light by the Gospel*.

That the Gospel contains the *Doctrine of a blessed and immortal Life*, is a consideration, that should endear it to the love, and esteem, of sinful, dying creatures; as much as the evidence of its proofs recommends it to the belief of all serious and unprejudiced minds. In this latter respect, *it is a faithful saying*, a Religion intirely credible; in the former, *a saying worthy of all acceptation*, to those who through fear of *Death* are all their lifetime subject to bondage. One would think, nothing more should be necessary, to gain the Redeemer a hearty welcome, besides the single benefit of his having vanquished, and destroyed this last enemy. This glorious Person hath done what no one else ever did, or can do, *He hath abolished Death*.

In discoursing on this Subject, I shall do these two things.

I. I shall consider in what sense, and by what means our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST *hath abolished Death.*

II. I shall lay before you some thoughts, in answer to the Question, Why Christ had not so abolished Death as to exempt men from a necessity of dying.

I. Let us consider in what sense, and by what means our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST *hath abolished Death.* The experience of all mankind shews, that we are not to understand it of his putting an immediate stop to the conquests of this King of Terrors, and delivering men from the law of mortality. Death hath reigned in all ages past, and will reign in all ages to come; over the followers of the Lamb, as well as over others; *there is no discharge in this war.* The only question here is, In what sense Death may be said *to be abolished*, though it be not immediately destroyed? The original word for *abolished*, καταργησις, signifies *to defeat, to frustrate, or make void.* Our Redeemer having undertaken to restore our lapsed nature, and put it into a condition as happy, as it ever enjoyed, we may say, even more happy; and to this end, having done and suffered all that the wisdom or justice of God demanded of him, hath hereby, as it were, turned the arms of Death against itself, chang-

ed its nature, disarmed it of all its terrors, and rendered all its victories and acquisitions of no effect. Death is not now the same thing, as it would have been without a Saviour. Its nature is quite altered in these two Respects--that it is no longer a mark of God's vindictive displeasure--and that its empire will not be perpetual---With regard to the first of these, the Apostle asks in a triumphant manner, *O Death, where is thy sting?* With regard to the latter, *O Grave, where is thy victory?*

1. Death is no longer a mark of God's vindictive displeasure. We cannot argue that the human race is forsaken, and cast off by God, because it is mortal; it doth not follow that because the carcasses of all men must fall in this wilderness, they shall therefore never enter into the promised Land; that God is not *reconciling the world to himself*, or actually reconciled to any, because *there is no man living, who shall not see Death*. We know the contrary to be true; that though the penalty as to the *Letter* of it, be fulfilled, yet the *Curse* is abolished. ^a *The sting of Death is sin, and the strength of sin is the Law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Sin derives its *guilt* from its being a transgression of a righteous and holy Law; and Death its *malignity* from unpardoned guilt: when therefore the Law is satisfied
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^a 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57.

and sin forgiven, Death may kill, but cannot hurt, and in the last event is more a friend than an enemy. ^b *If ye believe not that I am he, the Messiah, the Saviour of the world, ye shall die in your sins.* The same may be said to them who believe the Truth, but are never sanctified by it, *ye shall die in your sins.* And to such as these Death is terrible indeed, being but the beginning of sorrows; while to the truly good man, the man who believes and obeys the Gospel, it is the end and cure of them all.

Where sin remains the separation that Death makes between the Soul and the Body is the least thing to be considered; forasmuch as it likewise transmits the Soul into a state of darkness and misery, in which it must live eternally separated from God. O what Praises do we therefore owe to the Redeemer of men, that this, without our own inexcusable neglect and folly, cannot be our case! Praises as exalted, and as endless, as our happiness. ^c *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.* ^d *The children of men being partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same, that through Death he might destroy him that had the power of Death, that is, the Devil, and deliver them, who through fear of Death were all their life-time subject to bondage.* Why may not one thing meant by the Power of Death,

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^b John viii. 24. ^c Rom. viii. 34. ^d Heb. ii. 14, 15.

be those terrors that do frequently accompany the *approach*, and even the *thoughts* of it, and raise a tempest in the guilty soul, which the enemy of mankind is sure to increase, and make his advantage of, as often as he is permitted, tempting the soul to despair, that so, not seeing any way of escape, it might renounce the purpose of returning to God, and consent to the most sinful methods of prolonging a wretched life, and making it pass with pleasure, while it continues; in the mean while labouring to persuade itself, for its greater ease, that religion is all a fable, and what is said of another life to come after this, no way to be regarded? And thus is the dominion of Satan in the world kept up. In men, ignorant of the expiation of sin by the Sacrifice of the Cross, or, because of their Unbelief and Impenitency, having no part in that Sacrifice, the dread of Death is not more natural than reasonable; and where this dread of Death prevails to a high degree, it perfectly enslaves the Soul, and renders life a burthen. So formidable a thing is Death to the natural man. *Of all dreadful things the most dreadful*, as the *Philosopher* styles it. Its dart is dipped in poison; and look hideous and affrighting. O how much better, and more full of hope and comfort, is the condition of the pious christian, who, being reconciled to God, by the Death of his Son, can,
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when Dying, rejoyce in his falvation, and defy Death to separate him from his Love!

2. The empire of Death will not be perpetual, for *as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.* Death shall bring all mankind under his dominion, with the exception of that generation which shall be found alive at the coming of the Judge. To how little purpose, when they are to be recovered out of his hand, and not one subject left him throughout his dark territories? The day is hastening when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and live; and our Saviour shall, with his own hand, destroy this mighty champion, this last enemy; *he hath the keys of Hell, the State and Place of the Dead;* his command is absolute over the invifible regions of separate spirits, and the filent manfions of the grave; which, at his bidding, will let go his captives, not for price or reward; the fea delivering up the dead that are in it, and the grave the dead that are in it. Time was when Christ himself became obedient to Death, the Death of the Crofs; he now enjoys a full recompence; and instead of thofe few that came out of their graves, to honour his refurrection, and appeared in the holy City, fees all the Sons of *Adam* rifing out of their duft, and hath the pleafure to behold his faithful followers, a multitude without number, advancing towards

him in white and shining robes, whom, in their meanest state, he was never ashamed to be called *his brethren*, and much less will be so then. Here we may use those words of *Isaiab*, applying them to Death. *Wo to thee that spoileth, and thou wast not spoiled; when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt thyself be spoiled.* This sense of abolishing Death, by a resurrection of the dead, seems to be principally meant in the Text; for after the Apostle had said that Christ *hath abolished Death*, he immediately adds, *and hath brought Life and Immortality to Light by the Gospel*; which words I take to have a peculiar reference to the resurrection of the Body, and that immortal Life of the whole man which will ensue.

The doctrine of the Soul's existence out of the Body, and a future state of Rewards and Punishments, makes a part of the *Universal Creed* of mankind; but the Resurrection is a distinguishing doctrine of the Christian Religion. And indeed, the most proper and exact Translation of the words had been, *Life and Incorruption*, or an *Incorruptable Life*; which we have the greater reason to think ought to be understood of the *Body*, because the same Divine Writer, in another place, treating expressly of the Resurrection of the Body tells us, that though it was *sown in Corruption it should be raised*
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* *Isai.* xxxiii 4.

in Incorruption; that this Corruptable must put on Incorruption, and this Mortal must put on Immortality. Christ hath procured immortality for all; and for all that die in him a glorious and blessed one. By his Death, voluntarily submitted to, he did not merely *satisfy*, but *merit*; not merely obtain eternal redemption for the *Souls* of the righteous, but for their *Bodies* too; not merely acquire a right to restore his followers to *Innocence*, but to raise them to *Glory*. *He is the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in him, though he was dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die.* And as the Redeemer procures a happy Immortality for his faithful servants, so by his *Grace* and *Spirit* he is continually preparing them for that. *In bringing many Sons to Glory* he is appointed by God the *Captain of their Salvation*; it is under his conduct and discipline they are trained up for heaven; he communicates to them his Divine Spirit to exalt their natures, and refine their tempers and affections, that they may be capable of a part of these holy joys; and as an earnest of that undefiled inheritance which is reserved for them. It is in this quality the Spirit is bestowed on believers, *† We that are in this tabernacle do groan being burthened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality*

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might be swallowed up of life. Now be that bath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

Yet further, Christ in his own Resurrection hath given all that belong to him, both the strongest Assurance, and most lively Representation of theirs. ⁸ Being risen from the dead, he is become the first-fruits of them that slept. Now as the first-fruits fore-run the harvest, so they are of the same kind with it. The Head being risen, the Members must needs follow in their proper order. And if it be asked, *With what bodies do they come?* The answer is easy, their Bodies will be the same and yet unconceivably different; in respect to their *substance*, and general figure, the same as now; but unconceivably changed, and improved, in their *Qualities*; *spiritual, glorious, powerful, incorruptible, and immortal*; for as we have borne the image of the earthly Adam, so likewise shall we bear the image of the heavenly; who shall change this vile Body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body, according to the working, whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself. And how could the empire of Death be abolished more honourably to our Saviour, or more advantageously for us, than by a change from an imperfect, sinful, mortal

⁸ 1 Cor. xv. 20.

mortal state, to immortality of bliss and glory? I proceed,

II. To the next thing proposed, which is to lay before you some thoughts, in answer to the Question, Why Christ had not so abolished Death, as to exempt men from a necessity of dying. Why *is it appointed for men once to die?* Why does this sentence stand unrepealed? Would it not have been a more signal demonstration of the *Grace* of God, and the *Merits* of the Redeemer, had man past into another world without seeing Death? I presume we are all agreed, that the reason of this doth not arise from any defect of *Merit* or *Power* in our Saviour. Not from any defect of *Merit*. It is not that any thing was wanting in the *Satisfaction* of Christ, that all who believe in him are not immediately discharged from all the penal effects of sin, and made happy and immortal, If the Blood of Christ was of value sufficient to release us from *eternal* Punishments, and to intitle us to an *everlasting* Reward, we cannot imagine, but, if God had so pleased, and as to the Perfection of the *Attonement*, it might very well have availed for our deliverance from *temporal* Death. Was a man to discharge an immense Debt for another, he would clear the whole, and not leave a few Farthings for the Debter himself to pay. Thus here ;
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can it reasonably be supposed, that notwithstanding the *Satisfaction* made to the Justice of God by the obedience and sufferings of his Son, we likewise must satisfy for a part of our guilt, and die to expiate it? Besides, the little honour which such a supposition does our Saviour, it is absurd in the nature of the thing; since, the *Satisfaction* of Christ being compleat, there can be no necessity of exacting any thing from us, nor any valuable end served by it. And as little ground is there to suspect, that Christ's not abolishing Death in this sense, proceeds from want of *Power*. For surely, the *Power* required to raise the dead, is not less than that by which men might be preserved from dying. The former we know our Saviour to be possessed of, and that he cannot therefore want the latter; especially when we consider, that the men who shall be living, when Christ descends to Judgment, shall not die, but be changed; so as, without being unclothed of their Bodies, to be clothed upon with immortality: which shews, that the same way of new-making the Bodies of the Saints, without taking them down, is not impossible in every age of the world. But what then may we conceive to be the reasons of this dispensation? Among several very probable ones, I shall insist on a few of the most obvious.

1. The

I. The truth of God in the threatening of Death, is hereby more fully cleared, and vindicated, ^h *In the Day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.* Not thou, or another for thee; but *thou shalt surely die*; thou shalt become the right of Death, which shall immediately begin to work in thee, and as certainly prevail over thee, as if thou wert instantly to die. The sentence, after the transgression was committed, was alike absolute; ⁱ *Dust thou art, and unto Dust shalt thou return*; man henceforward shall have no privilege, in respect of mortality, above other living creatures, but shall die as they do; he and they ^k *have one breath, and shall go unto one place; all are of the Dust, and all shall turn to Dust again.*

To clear this matter I shall observe, that by the breach of this Command, *Not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge, of Good and Evil*, a double penalty was incurred, *natural*, and *positive*. By the *natural* penalty, I mean, that which the Reason of our First Parents would tell them they were to expect, whether mentioned, or no; as namely, that they should forfeit the happiness of God's Favour and Communion with him; to which they should not be again admitted, but on terms of Reconciliation, unknown to them, because not depending on them, but on God to appoint. Such a penalty as this is understood

^h Gen. ii. 17.

ⁱ iii. 19.

^k Eccles. iii. 19, 20.

stood in all the Laws given by God to his intelligent creatures, The *positive* penalty is that which is explicitly, or in so many worlds, annexed to the Law, as, in the present case, *Death*. Death was threatened to *Adam*, and in him, to his *Posterity*; for *by one man sin entered into the world, and Death by sin*; that is, by the sin of this one man. And what is this *Death*? It is something that ^l*passeth upon all men*; and therefore cannot be *eternal* *Death*, or what in the New Testament is called the *second* *Death*; inasmuch as every holy person is secured against this. It remains then that we interpret the *Death* that came into the world by *Adam's* first sin, and which all men are liable to, as descended from him, in the most obvious sense of the word, as signifying the separation of Soul and Body, or *man's returning to the Dust*. These last are the very words of the original sentence; and that this sentence was not confined to the First Man, but included his *Posterity*, omitting that parallel place out of *Ecclesiastes*, before-mentioned, chap. iii. ver. 19, 20. we may argue from what is said, *Heb. ix. 17. It is appointed unto men once to die*; for where else is this *appointed*, but in this sentence, *Dust thou art, and to Dust shalt thou return?* Now see and admire the expedient which the Divine Wisdom hath found out! It was fit the threatening

^k Rom. v. 12.

ening should be executed; the veracity of God seemed to require it. Man therefore shall die. But shall man die without hope? Is there no room for mercy? Blessed be God, our case is not thus desperate. Our gracious God hath *found a ransom*, not to deliver us from going down into the pit, but to bring us up out of it. We die because Adam sined; but because Christ died, we shall rise again. Because of our own sins, we deserve not only to die, but to be miserable for ever; Christ hath satisfied for our sins, and by that means, made way for our being intirely restored to the presence and love of our Maker. O the depth both of the Wisdom, and the Grace, of God!—The contrary example of those, who, when the end of all things is come, *shall not die*, but *be changed*, doth not at all invalidate the present Argument; since as the way in which they shall put off mortality is peculiar, so the circumstances of their case will be the same; and notwithstanding this exception, it is still exactly true, that *the human race is mortal*.

2. Death is continued as a standing lesson and example of the evil of sin; that we might be warned not to offend this holy God, by transgressing his righteous Commands, might not slight his Authority, play with his Anger, or presume on his Goodness. See, what one sin alone hath, and will, cost! The Death of a whole Race! Of thousands

fands and millions of creatures, that might otherwise have been immortal! Is it safe, or wise, think ye, to provoke this God? If there is no avoiding a thing that Nature hath such an abhorrence to, as the Disunion of Soul and Body; if we must necessarily suffer this, as the posterity of sinful Parents, of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy, who continue in a course of actual, wilful, and presumptuous sin? And, without repentance, what have they to look for? Were men never to taste the bitterness of Death, they would not be so sensible of the bitterness of sin; were they to spend a few years in this world, and then not to die, but disappear, they would be more apt to spend their years in vanity. The great Governor and Judge of the world would not appear so awful on his Throne, as he does now, that he commissions Death to go forth on his *pale Horse*, and to lay the nations of the earth waste and desolate. O how shall I reconcile myself to this terrible, this sin revenging God, *in whose hand is the breath of all living*, which he takes away when he pleases? Hide myself from him I cannot; nor, by all my tears and entreaties, prevail with him to grant *that I may live for ever, and not see corruption*; but by true and timely repentance, I may obtain the forgiveness of all my sins, and get into the
number

number of those blessed persons over whom the *second* Death hath no power.

3. Death is ordained as a means of abolishing sin. And there seems to be a peculiar congruity or fitness in this method of purifying human nature from its corrupt affections, in order to demonstrate the wisdom of God, which can bring good of evil; that as by sin Death came into the world, so by Death sin shall be utterly extinguished. Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth *eternal* Death to the wicked; and *temporal* Death, having finished the work given it to do, shall put an everlasting period to the sins of the righteous. Sin first rendered man liable to Death; Death sets the good man at liberty from sin; and, by delivering him from sin, places him above all future liability to Death. ^m *He that is dead is freed from sin.* The body of *sin* is destroyed together with the body of *flesh*; so that, from that happy moment, the soul is all life and purity, every irregular desire is killed, every stain purged off.

And though I am not of the opinion of some, that all the sinful Propensities of nature, having their original from the Body, will, in every renewed soul, cease and vanish of course, as soon as the tie between it and the Body is broken, so as not to need any further operation of the divine Spirit to
compleat

^m Rom. vi. 7.

compleat the work ; (for this would make evil habits to be intirely corporeal, and to hang as loose to the Soul, as the garment of the Body does ; and consequently, would infer the separate state of all souls, both of the just and the unjust, to be a state of sinless Purity) though, I say, I am far from this opinion, yet I cannot but esteem it very probable, concerning souls which have maintained their superiority over the Body while they were in it, that their absence from the Body will naturally contribute to their greater freedom from all vitious inclinations, by cutting off all Temptations on the side of the Body, restoring the rectitude of the judgment, and drawing the curtain that was before things spiritual and eternal ; the effect of which will be a sudden and mighty increase of affection to these glorious objects. To which I will add, that it seems founded in Reason, that perfect liberty from sin should follow the Soul's release from the Body, in which it *first* learned to sin, and which hath been the *Tempter*, as well as the *Instrument*, in most of the sins which it hath been drawn to commit. A most blessed state this, into which Death translates the righteous ! Which may justly serve to reconcile them to it, and gain it pardon for all the fears it puts them to, and the loss they sustain by it. If this tabernacle of the Body be pulled down, let this comfort us, that like
like

like *Sampson*, we shall be revenged at our Death, and all our enemies will be crushed, and perish in the fall. Every individual Saint, as he dies, enters into a state of faultless perfection; and it is not long before the whole Assembly and Church of the Faithful, *whose names are written in Heaven*, will be completed; at what time *it will be presented a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing*, but endued with unblemished holiness; and then *cometh the end*, when all the spirits of the just, that have lived from the beginning to the end of the world, being thoroughly sanctified and cleansed, shall have Bodies prepared them, pure and spotless like themselves, into which they shall joyfully enter, there to dwell for ever.

4. Death is continued for the tryal of the christian's Faith, and other graces. The Body drops to the earth, and what becomes of the Soul? Or is there any such thing, properly speaking, as a Soul; a Being that can live out of the Body as well as in it? Is it not rather made up of the finer parts of the Body? And are not all its thoughts, reasonings, and volitions a result from the motion and temperament of the blood and spirits; in consequence of which, when the Body dies, the Soul must die with it? What is a man better than a beast; *since that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts, even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the*

*other, yea, they have all one breath; so that, to appearance, a man hath no prebeminence above a beast. And why should we imagine then that he hath any? This tempts some men to turn unbelievers, glad to imbrace any notions that will countenance them in their libertine courses. Here then Faith comes in to the relief of the good man. He sees not another world, his senses rather contradict it, but by Faith he knows that there must be such a world; partly from the testimony of his own Reason, which convinces him, that so noble a creature as man must be made for a longer duration than *threescore years and ten*, and for higher purposes than he answers in this life; but chiefly on the testimony of God's Word. Yes, the Soul is of a distinct nature, and independent existence, from the Body; doth not at Death cease to be, or fall asleep, but only removes to other dwellings; and, for as much as its power of thinking was not derived from the Body, but very much cloged and hindered by it, the Soul not only survives and acts in a separate state, but is capable of sublimer operations, and more intense delights or sorrows than in this Body. I am persuaded there is another world, tho' invisible; another state besides, and beyond, this; though instead of seeing men pass into it, all I perceive of them becomes the prey of Death and Oblivion. This persuasion, entertained*

tertain'd upon rational and scripture motives, and applied to the regulation of the heart and life, is an argument of an ingenuous and well disposed mind; which a persuasion much stronger would hardly be, that was wrought by a daily view of great numbers vanishing out of sight, without leaving their Bodies behind them. The testimony of one or more sent from the dead, to the truth and reality of another world, would not be so irresistible an evidence of it as this.

Again; we see the Body as soon as it is dead becomes as senseless and motionless as a stone, or a clod of earth; and not long after turns to dust, its form intirely lost, and the very particles of which it was composed sundered it may be at the greatest distance from one another. Now there is something difficult and shocking to the first thoughts of our mind, in the supposition of these Bodies rising from the grave. How shall these dry bones live? How shall this scattered dust rally again? How can it enter into the heart of man to conceive that the Soul and Body shall be reunited, after they have been separated so long? This is a trial worthy the Faith of a christian; and is not an over-match for Faith, though it be so for the Imagination. It is enough that God hath promised it; I leave it to him to answer the difficulties, whose power is infinite, joined with a knowledge and understanding that

are the same. Yet further; I must die, possibly shall be called to die for Religion. Have I Faith enough to bear me up in such a time? Or to carry me to it? Is my belief of an unseen world so strong, my hope of heaven so lively and well-grounded, my love to God so superlative, that I can, without regret, resign this life, and its most valuable enjoyments, and freely enter on a new state of Being? Are these graces, in conjunction, sufficient to overcome in some good measure my natural abhorrence of Death, and make me willing to depart out of the Body, that I may be present with the Lord? Yet once more,

5. Death is for a time suffered to reign over the human race, because abolishing its empire at the last day, in the manner it will be then done, will be more glorious for the Redeemer, than preventing its temporary power and dominion would have been. Next to creation, what more illustrious act of omnipotence than raising the Dead? What more surprising spectacle than a world starting new out of its ruins? The innumerable dead returning at once to life? The first man, and all his offspring, who lived in distant and successive ages of the world making their appearance together, and together resuming those Bodies of which they were, one after another, dispossessed by Death? They that made their exit out of the world
a thou-

a thousand or two thousand years ago, shall be glorified no sooner than we; *they obtained a good report through Faith, yet shall they not receive the final Promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they, without us, should not be made perfect.* And is there not something more grand, august, and astonishing in such a scene of things, than if men had, one by one, been translated, in their Bodies, into the world of recompences? What conqueror, celebrated in the annals of time, ever equaled our Saviour? The conquests of Death are as extensive as his, but not so rapid. What Death took several ages to conquer, our great Redeemer shall recover, as it were, *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptable.* By Faith, behold the King of Saints at the head of his triumphant army! How splendid is his appearance! And how dazzling would be theirs, were not their glory in some respect eclipsed by his!

Nothing now remains but the Application of this Subject. *Hath Christ abolished Death?* Then,

1. How little reason hath the true christian to be afraid of Death. Why should he shrink and tremble at its approach, when it only wears a frightful vizer? Why decline its summons, when it is sent on the

kindest message, to bring his Soul into the Presence of his Lord? Christian, hath not thy Saviour drank of the same cup; since which, though bitter to sense, is it not become a cup of blessing? A brave *Athenian* condemned to Death by his ungrateful country-men, observing one, that was to suffer with him, under the greatest distress, upbraids him in this manner, “ Is it nothing “ to thee that thou art to die with *Phocion*?” This supported the penitent Thief, as he saw Jesus hanging by him; “ I suffer justly, yet “ *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy “ Kingdom;*” with which faith of his, our blessed Master was so well pleased, as to assure him, *this Day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.* And can he then forget any one that hath for a long time been his devoted willing servant? It is impossible he should. Alas, but I must go down into the grave, and *make my bed in the darkness!* But as God said unto *Jacob, Fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will go down with thee, and will also surely bring thee up again,* dost thou not hear him after the same manner comforting and encouraging thee? God will appoint thee a set time, and remember thee; will support thee in Death, and raise thee from the Dead. Wherefore say as the Psalmist, *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of Death, I will fear no evil; for thou art*

art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

2. The good christian under the loss of those that are in the same number with himself, ought not to sorrow as others that have no hope. For if *we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.* It is hard, I confess, to part with a dear and valuable Acquaintance, Relative, or Friend, *that was as our own Soul, with whom we took sweet counsel, and who was often helpful to us.* Perhaps there are some circumstances more than ordinarily afflicting in the stroke. The Person removed by Death, may, as in the history of the Widow of Nain, be the *only Son of his Mother* *, concerning whom she was ready to say, *This same shall comfort me*; in the flower of his days, one of great hopes, and likely to have been useful to the world, and the church of God, if his life had been prolonged. O, say not in this case, or so much as once entertain the thought, what profit is it to serve God, since *righteousness delivereth not from Death*? To what purpose were all the bounties of nature, and this natural stock improved by industry? To what end the trouble and expence of education? Why was all this waste? Since as the Fool (the ungodly sinner, the stupid Soul, of low capacities,

* This was the case as to the Deceased.

cities, and mean endowments, the ignorant, and the slothful, from whom nothing was to be expected) dies, so dieth the ingenious and sober Youth, whose attainments were beyond his years, and promised early fruits of wisdom and religion? What encouragement is here for any one to dig for wisdom as for hidden treasure, when, it may be, before any use can be made of it, it is buried in the earth again? So when *Soloman* saw that himself, the wisest of the sons of men, had no privilege from the calamities of life, or the arrest of Death, beyond the most simple and sottish, that one thing happened to them both, he cries out, not without something of passion and surprize, *And why then was I more wise?*

It is a sufficient answer to all this, that no man perisheth at Death in the same sense as Beasts do; and, least of all, the wise and virtuous; that the soul is not dissolved or annihilated; its excellent faculties, its intellectual, moral, and divine acquisitions, are not lost, but only perfected at once, instead of being carried on by our slow and painful methods; that Preparations for usefulness are accepted by a gracious God, and will be amply crowned. So that whatever occasion there be for mourning, when good men are taken from the earth, whether in their green or in their riper age, it is all on the part of those that are left behind, who lose the benefit

nefit or the pleasure they might have received from their longer stay. But though they have reason to mourn, yet not so as to forget that the breach is not incurable, the parting is not for ever. We part for a little while to meet again in a better world, with better dispositions and qualities, and upon better terms, never to sin, sorrow, or die more, never to speak an idle word, or do a foolish thing, which, Gods knows, is more than can be said of the best of us now. The Souls of the Faithful departed this life, live with God, and one another, in the most delightful intercourse and communication. But the Soul is not the whole man ; it must therefore be a most pleasing thought to creatures, constituted as we are, that pious Souls shall meet their Bodies, and then, in this state of union, converse and join embraces with their Fellow-Saints. Never were the passions of Friends so visible in their looks as they will be then. With unspeakable pleasure will they survey themselves and one another, and all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes ; which, by the way, is a very good argument why such persons should moderate them now.

3. *Hath Christ abolished Death?* How dear should this render him, and his memory, to mortal men. *To them that believe he is precious,* among many accounts, on this, that he hath opened the gate of life to them.

them. A wretch, whom meagre famine stares in the face, can never forget the bountiful hand that relieves him ; the poor captive the generous Soul that redeems him ; a condemned malefactor the compassionate person that procures his pardon ; a man in danger of losing his life the uncommon friend that saves it, at the hazard, and much more with the certain loss of his own. JESUS CHRIST is this *Benefactor*, this *Redeemer*, this *Friend* to us, and ought therefore to be loved and served with the greatest ardour, and had in everlasting remembrance. To conclude,

4. *Hath Christ abolished Death?* How solicitous then should every one be to secure his interest in this Redeemer, by complying with the terms, on which alone, he will become *the Author of Salvation* to any. If I lead a wicked and ungodly life ; if I am under the power of sensual and worldly lusts ; if I despise the tenders of gospel-grace ; in a word, if I am an enemy to Christ, by not having the same mind in me that was in him, and doing the same works of righteousness that he did, but the quite contrary ; how can it be supposed that he will be so far my Friend, as to raise me to a blessed and glorious immortality ? Raised I shall be as well as others ; but, alas my awaking will be to Pain, Horror, and Misery ! To a holy Jesus none can be acceptable but holy persons ;

persons; he will espouse the cause of none but such; he will be a Saviour to no others.

When I see so many fall sacrifices to Death, some on my right hand, and some on my left, and the examples are sometimes the more awakening for being of persons that might seem to have some right to think of longer life, on account either of their youth, or strength, should it not make me thoughtful what I have to do in the midst of so many Deaths? Where the Person deceased was a bad man, how I may avoid his End. Where there is reason to think that he is a good man, how I may die like him, Was he not my equal, my companion, my chosen acquaintance, on whom Death hath seized? And shall I be like the beast of the field, who when their fellows go to the slaughter, seem not to miss their company, nor make one reflection on their own danger? Can I forbear asking *Why was he taken? And why am I left?* Why was he cut down, while I am suffered to stand yet longer? Was it not, that as he was fitter to live, so more prepared to die? O if I had been appointed and chosen to Death, in what condition and posture of Soul was I to meet him? I adore the sovereign decrees of Providence, not severe to him, who was ready for his change, and kind and merciful to me. Whatever were the reasons of this difference made between him and me sure I am, the consideration of it
reproves

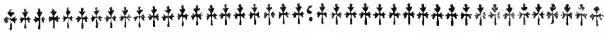
reproves my youthful vanity and mispence of time, my pleasurable and careless way of living, my too great unconcern about my Soul, and my everlasting state; and should awaken me to be more diligent and active, more serious and devout, more sollicitous to redeem and improve my time, to think of those things that are pure, lovely, and honourable, and of good report, and, whatever gifts or attainments I possess, to lay them all on God's Altar, as an humble offering to him. And thus, by the grace of God, I am determined to act; for these I see are the things that will be found unto praise, honour, and glory, when my place here on earth shall know me no more.

My Young Friend was but shown to this world, and then transplanted to another; and my Lord and Master himself finished his Ministry in less than four Years time, a short but glorious course. May I *run the Race set before me*, whether it be longer or shorter, with like zeal and vigour, *looking to Jesus the Author and Finisher of my Faith*, and depending intirely on him, both for strength in the way, and for my reward at the end. *To them that are in Christ, there is no Condemnation; all things are theirs, Death itself not excepted.* Say therefore, I am resolved to submit to the Redeemer; I will be his, on his own terms, which, I am fully satisfied, cannot but be reasonable; it

it shall be my ambition, as it is my duty, to love him, obey him, imitate him, and live to him; and then at last, *I shall not be ashamed of my Hope, knowing whom I have trusted, and persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, against that Day.*







*The fear of Death, as a natural
Passion, considered, both with res-
pect to the grounds of it, and the
remedies against it.*

I N A

Funeral Discourse

Occasioned by the

Much lamented **D E A T H**

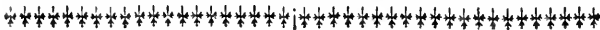
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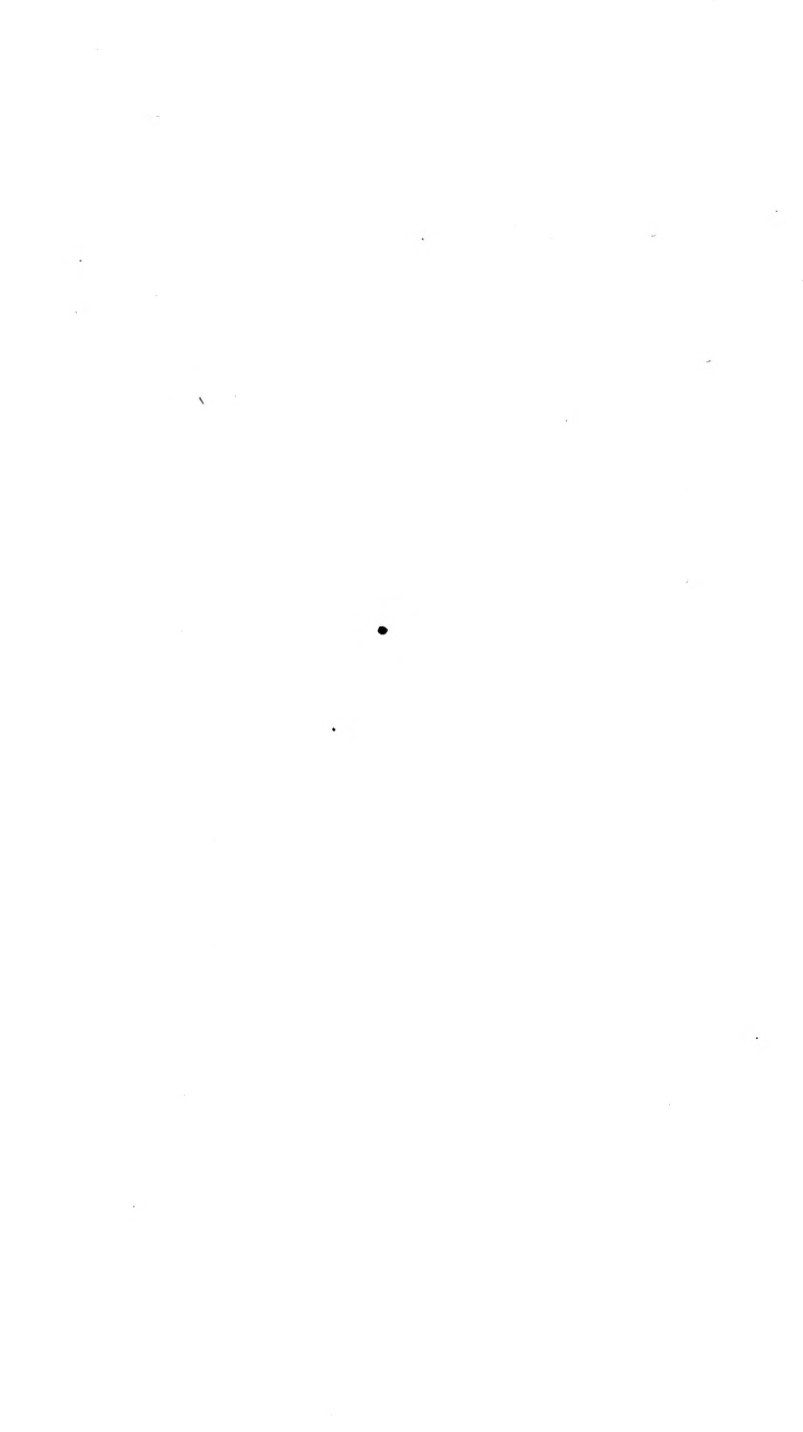
Mrs. Elizabeth Welman,

I N T H E

XVI. Year of her Age.

1727-8.







T O

Mrs. W E L M A N.

MADAM,

THEY that are wise, and understand the loving kindness of the Lord, can discern his paternal affection, and tender care of the welfare and happiness of those that fear him, in the sharpest trials, and most uncomfortable and darkest scenes of life. For though no affliction be for the present joyous but grievous, yet have they not any reason to complain; since, besides the peaceable fruits of righteousness, which they gather from these thorns, there is this further advantage attending an afflicted condition, that it brings them to entertain more friendly, and unprejudiced thoughts of Death. They have all the same natural weaknesses and passions, as the rest of mankind; nor was their divine Master himself without them, in the days of his flesh; but then, as by his most perfect example they are taught, so by that higher, that supernatural Principle which he

communicates to them, they are enabled to direct, to controul, and govern them.

God hath not seen fit to exempt them from the Fear of Death, but he hath mercifully provided against the excesses of this Fear; having, by the gospel-revelation, drawn aside the veil from before the glories of the upper world, and continually weakening their alliance with the world here below, by the various troubles and calamities, which, under his wise direction, befall them in it. Hence the attractions of the heavenly felicity come to be more sensibly felt, the less there is to oppose and counteract them; and finding so many things to wean them from this strange land, like weary pilgrims they are more willing to return into their own country, though the valley of Death must be past in the way to it. So remarkably does the Providence of God conspire with the encouraging doctrines and promises of his Word, to assist us in our conquest of a Passion, which, when it prevails, is one of the greatest enemies to the repose of the mind, and the tranquillity and happiness of life.

You have, Madam, been made to possess months of sorrow, been brought low, almost within sight of the grave by a sickness of your own; and have, as it were, entered it in one, who was a part of yourself, and not more dear to you, through the strong workings of parental affection, than for those recommending qualities by which she engaged the esteem
of

of all her acquaintance. If I say that I sincerely sympathize with you, I do not pretend to any merit herein; since by the many obligations which you have laid me under, and, if you will give me leave to publish my happiness, by the honour and advantage of your friendship, you have left me without all power to do otherwise.

But, Madam, there is at present this additional reason for my mingling sorrows with you, that I have been lately touched in the same tender part. Shall we say, as an afflicted Parent once did, that we will go down to our children to the grave mourning? Rather, let us comfort ourselves with the reviving hope that we shall one day meet them in a better world than this which they have left. They were hardly entered into the field of battle, and are already more than conquerors, through him who loved them. And do we grieve at the shortness of their conflict? Or envy them the easy acquisition of their crown? If they knew our sorrows, and were indulged a visit to our world, would they not be ready to chide us for our intemperate lamentations, and to say, weep not for us, who are above your pity, and should not thank you for your tears, but as they are marks of a well-meaning, tho' mistaken love, but rather weep for yourselves, who are still sailing on a tempestuous sea, exposed to numberless perils, and combating with doubts and fears, and temptations,

tions, with diseases and Death? Yet let not any troubles you meet with in the world make you forget the many reasons you have to be satisfied with the dispensations of divine Providence, and to rejoyce in the believing views of the heavenly rest.

That God, who hath hitherto helped you, may still be your guide, and sanctify to you both the injoyments and afflictions of life, and by his multiplied blessings on your surviving offspring, increase your comfort in them, shall be the constant Prayer of,

MADAM,

Your most obliged,

Humble Servant,

Taunton, March
20, 1727-8.

HENRY GROVE.



S E R M O N VII.

The Fear of Death a natural Passion.

ISAIAH XXXVIII. 3.

----*And Hezekiah wept sore.*

WHEN we consider the character of *Hezekiah*, as a person equally eminent for his piety and his high station, together with the age of his life, when this, which is related of him in the text, happened, we shall be ready to wonder at his behaviour on this occasion. Being on his sick-bed, the Prophet *Isaiab* is sent to him with this message from God, *Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live*; thy distemper is in its nature mortal, and beyond the reach of human remedies, so that, without a miracle of Providence in thy favour, thou hath nothing to count upon but Death. A message so unexpected and so awfully delivered

puts this good man into such disorder, that he immediately loses all command of himself, and bursts into a flood of tears. The King of *Judah*, in whom a greatness of soul might have been expected, suitable to that of his condition, *wept* to hear that he must die. A Saint of the first rank, who was able to appeal to his all-knowing Judge, *Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight!* and who, consequently, had ground to hope for a life of blessedness to come, over which Death hath no power, *wept sore* when told that he must resign this perishing, momentary life. One advanced to the middle stage or period of human life, being now near upon forty years old, (at what time men have usually reason and experience to convince them, especially being no longer blinded by their youthful passions, that the hope of an earthly happiness is no better than an idle dream) is grieved beyond measure that he must leave a world, which, upon repeated trial, he had found to be, at the best, empty and vain.

How shall we account for all this? Shall we think that *Hezekiah* having at this time no Son to succeed him, was concerned for the unsettled state which the nation was like to fall into after his decease? But had this been the thing that chiefly lay upon his mind,

mind, though, I confess, it would not have been any way unbecoming him to desire longer life, yet I do not see why his desire of it upon so generous a principle should express itself in such a profusion of tears, which seem to be the language of the more weak, and tender passions. And, indeed, if we read the writing which *Hezekiah* composed after his recovery, we shall have no reason to question that the love of life lay at the bottom of all this lamentation; *I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave, I am deprived of the residue of my years. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world, &c.* It is not unlikely, that if he had had time to recollect himself, and his disease had allowed of it, he would have received the tidings with a greater composure of mind, and decency of outward behaviour: but being taken at a surprize, and when his mind was sunk, and clouded, with the disorder of his body, nature betrayed itself, before he was able to put a restraint upon it, and to make use of the succours of Reason and Faith.

That natural courage, or contempt of Danger and Death, for which some men are admired, depends very much on the state of the body, and other accidental circumstances; insomuch that if the pulse beat low, the

spirits languish, and those things which used to animate them are out of the way, their courage presently seems to have forsaken them, the Fear of Death, which was thought to have no place in such persons, revives, and it appears they are like other men, poor, weak, and timorous mortals. Thus *David*, who, when but a youth, and keeper of his father's sheep, snatched a lamb out of the mouth of the lion and the bear; and afterwards freely hazarded his life in the high places of the field; this same *David*, when sickness had enfeebled him, and made him an easy conquest for Death, flies before an enemy which he had so often challenged and defied.

^a O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence and be no more! From whence I shall observe that

The Fear of Death is a natural Passion.

Grace is the best preservative against this, and other infirmities of nature, but *Grace* is not always a perfect cure. Indeed the passion is not to be rooted out; but, by proper methods, may be governed, and kept under, as to create us very little disturbance. As a *natural Passion* the Fear of Death is of great use, and wisely designed by our Maker, as it is probable, among other ends, for these two, *viz.* the maintaining and strengthen-

^a Psal. xxxix. 13.

strengthening the belief of a future life—and making men more sollicitous to provide for it.

I. The Fear of Death was planted in nature as a guard on the notion of a life to come, and a considerable support to the belief of it. Had there been no future state, it is very probable the Creator of man would have so formed him, as to recompense the shortness of his life by its greater freedom from disquietude while it lasted, that he might have had all the pleasure that life could afford him, without the secret sting which he now finds in the thoughts of Death; he would not have been haunted by a passion, which, separated from all hope of any happiness hereafter, renders his condition in some respects more miserable than that of the beasts of the field; but, like them, would have enjoyed the present, and not troubled himself about the future. Thus, if there had been no future state, is it probable man would have been made.

And, on the other hand, had he been so made, without any Fear of Death mixed in his natural temper, it is reasonable to think, that too many would have concluded that there was no future state, no life after this; their present existence would have so far satisfied them, that they would not have dreaded the end of it; and, being satisfied with it, they would have expected nothing further, esteeming the goodness and wisdom
of

of God sufficiently manifested in a life of a few years continuance. That we might not be tempted to take up with such thoughts, to the Love of Life is added an equal Fear of Death; and these twin passions together give us notice of some other state of things besides the present. We naturally stretch our thoughts and our desires beyond our little span, and are disposed to believe a thing so agreeable to our Reason, and our Inclinations too, as a world to come; at least, till we have find a way all hope of our being happy there.

2. Another end which the Fear of Death serves is to make men more solicitous to provide for it. What we dread, as well as what we love, is apt to return into our minds. It may be we are not willing to think of it, we studiously endeavour to forget it, but, whether we will or no, it comes in our way, and makes us take notice of it. It is so in the case before us; we fear Death, and because we fear it, the melancholy, the disagreeable image is continually crossing our view. How often do the very pleasures and enjoyments of life give occasion to the thoughts of Death? Are my circumstances easy and plentiful? Do I spend my days in mirth? How natural, and sometimes unavoidable, is the reflection, Death, which I so much fear, is at hand, and Death will put an end to my mirth, and make me

as poor as the poorest of mankind? Hence it is, that in the midst of laughter, or, if not then, yet, as soon as it is past, and we have leisure for a sober thought, the heart is sorrowful. Happy for many, that it is so, since, by this sadness and pensiveness, their hearts have been made better.

So again, the numerous examples of mortality, and more especially the warnings we have of it in ourselves, recall the thoughts of Death; and these thoughts, being of a thing we fear, are not alway so easily banished, as they might be, if they were indifferent to us; in that case, as they would be less frequent, so more slight, and vanishing. Now it is many times this natural thoughtfulness about Death that gives the first check to the motions of a vain, a sensual, an earthly heart, and teaches it sobriety and moderation. Alas, what is all the glory of the world, when the imagination hath spread the shadow of Death over it? What is sensual pleasure, or worldly wealth, when we consider that they will be past and gone with this life? And thus the Fear of Death, by suggesting the thoughts of it, and making those thoughts more weighty and piercing is exceeding serviceable to us. As it is further, by setting our thoughts and meditations on work concerning the best methods of opposing and qualifying these fears. Shall my Soul have no rest from the alarms of this
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troublesome passion, be never able to surmount it? O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this Fear of Death? Here Religion kindly offers relief, the relief of its doctrines and promises, which, under the secret and powerful influences of the Spirit of life, do, in concurrence with its own fears, dispose the soul to listen to the voice of wisdom; so that the man, who was before given up to vanity, turns his thoughts to the concerns of eternity; and the good man minds them with greater seriousness and application. And thus, where there is a promise of life, as there is under the Gospel, and men by a continued course of wilful and heinous sin have not quenched the Spirit of God, and destroyed their hopes of mercy; that is, as a *natural Passion*, the Fear of Death hath a most salutary tendency, making them flee for refuge to the hope that is set before them.

In the further consideration of this point, I shall

- I. Inquire what it is in Death that makes it so unpleasing to nature; or what the principal grounds are of that aversion, which men naturally have to Death.
- II. Propose a few Rules, or Directions, which may be of use to reconcile us to the thoughts of Death notwithstanding the reluctance and opposition of nature against it.

I. I shall inquire what are the principal grounds of that aversion which all men naturally have to Death; and, under each head, suggest such thoughts, by way of relief, as tend to quiet and establish the heart, in respect of that particular ground of trouble.

I. We therefore fear Death because it is our departure out of this world, which is our native place. The world hath been the abode of mankind for many ages, they were the first inhabitants of the country, earth-formed, and not transplanted, in the manner of a colony, from some other part of the creation. The first man was taken out of the dust of the ground, and had his habitation assigned him where he had his original. And though he and his descendants have successively been transported into unseen and distant regions, yet what children they had were all born to them before they left this world. The earth is our common mother; we come naked from her womb, and are cast helpless on her lap, she is the nurse of our infancy, supplies all the delights of our childhood, and youth, and too often of our more rational, and advanced age. Here we first enter upon Being; here we first draw vital air; here the light first salutes our eyes, and our other senses are entertained with
their

their several objects; here we learn to speak and go, to think and reason; in a word, all we know of life comes either immediately, or remotely from our acquaintance with this world, into which we grow from our earliest years. And it is no wonder if all this begets a particular fondness for the place of our birth. A man's native country hath always attractives for him, how destitute forever of them in the opinion of others. *Haddad* the *Edomite* having made his escape into *Egypt* in the slaughter of his countrymen by *Joab*, though he was as well received by the king as he could desire, and matched into the royal family, and though he was but a child when first driven from his home; yet no sooner heard that *David* and *Joab* were both dead, but he prepared for his return, and to *Pharaoh*, who expostulated the matter with him, asking him ^b *whether he lacked any thing with him that he sought to go to his own country*, answered, *nothing, however let me go in any wise.*

Death hath naturally the appearance of a melancholy banishment from our home, and the more melancholy, because it must one time or other be submitted to by all.

All this is very true; but all this should move me little, when I consider that every real christian is *born again*; and by virtue of his *new birth*, which is from above, becomes

^b 1 Kings xi. 15, &c.

comes related to a new world, and as it were, loses the relation he before had to this. Heaven is as truly the country of holy souls, their city, their home, as if they had been born there; they are naturalized to it; not by a legal change only, or a change in their name or outward state, but properly, by their being *made partakers of a divine nature.* *‘Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world.* You know who spake these words, and to whom they were spoken. The disciples of Jesus have left the world to follow him. In the world they are strangers and pilgrims, and do so account themselves, as well as are often so treated by the world; *they desire and seek a country, even an heavenly,* having their faces, and their hearts Zion-ward, thither they are continually tending, there is their rest, long wished for, but never found, till they come there; how great soever be the distance between, they have ^d *their conversation in heaven,* and which is a yet bolder expression, ^e *their dwelling place in God.* The last moment of their lives, like the last step of a wearisome journey, sets their feet within the gates of the heavenly *Jerusalem,* and brings them to their father’s house: or, if you will, Death doth no more than translate them from one mansion of the divine presence, to another more blissful and
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^c John xv. 19. ^d Phil. iii. 20. ^e Psal. xc. 1.

glorious ; from the presence of God here on earth, which they know only by *faith*, to his presence in heaven, of which they are assured by *sight*.

A learned and good man,* when in his last moments mention was made of the celestial city, with trembling lips, and dying voice, not to be heard without difficulty, spake to his friends that stood by, after this manner. We read of the city *Jerusalem*, that it was divided into two parts, the upper, and the lower ; the upper, in which were mount Zion, the holy temple, and the king's palace, was inhabited by the tribe of *Levi*, and the royal family ; the lower by the people, who from thence ascended to those sacred abodes : by which figure this pious man would have us to conceive the double state of the church, the true *Jerusalem*, and *mother of us all*, to be delineated. We, who are in this earthly valley, being as yet in the kingdom of grace only, but, as many of us as are *made kings and priests unto God by Jesus Christ*, in due time do ascend to the *Jerusalem above*, where is our enrolment, and our fixed seat. So great was the satisfaction which this holy man, just upon the point of leaving this sinful world, had in the view of that glorious world, to which he was related, and where he was now about to enter, and for ever dwell.

2. When

* *Drusus*, as it is related in his Life.

2. When we leave the world at Death, we not only leave the place, but all that is dear to us in it. ^f *As we came forth of our mother's womb, naked shall we return, to go as we came, and shall take nothing of our labour, which we may carry in our hand.* Afflicted Job, the wise author of ^g *Ecclesiastes*, and the ^h *Apostle Paul*, do all speak this language. Death dissolves the nearest, strongest ties of nature and friendship; hath no regard to all the names of endearment among men, such as *parents and children, brother and sister, husband and wife*; takes us from the embraces of those that loved us, and those whom we loved; takes us away while they are weeping around us. *I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world*, is the mournful complaint of *Hezekiah*. *Lover and friend shall be put far from me, and my acquaintance into darkness.* I must be striped bare of all my worldly goods, be thrown out of all. Whatever I enjoyed, whatever I called mine, whatever I admired, or doated upon, must be left; I must bid a long adieu to all. These are killing thoughts to such as have set their affections on things here below. And O how small is the number of those that have not! How few can we find whom the earth does not hold fast to itself by some powerful alliance, some secret fondnesses, and attachments! The affection

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^f Job i. 21, ^g Eccles. v. 15. ^h I Tim. vi. 7.

is twisted with their very souls, so that a separation is not to be made without the utmost violence and pain. As a person, whose heart is on shore, among his beloved relations, and acquaintance, and his old delights, takes his leave of them again, and again, puts to sea unwillingly, and, while the ship carries him at a distance from them, is not able to remove his eyes till they are no longer to be seen, so do we commonly part from this world; we know not how to bid our last farewell, we would fain linger a little longer, take another view of this and that object, and should hardly ever consent to part, did not Death force us away, and close our eyes in eternal darkness.

But now if I consider this matter as a *christian*, what should make me so exceedingly loth to quit my earthly friends, and interests? Is it that the world I am going to is a desert, barren place, without society, and without pleasures? Or because they are inferior to those of this lower world? Neither of these can be pretended. Heaven hath its society, and that society glorious and divine; its pleasures, and those pleasures pure and entrancing. The *society* are an *innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the first-born, and the spirits of just men made perfect*, united by mutual love, and the most intire conformity of holy inclinations, under *Jesus the mediator of the new*

new covenant, and by him *to God* the fountain and *judge of all*. And I do not suppose that any of my christian friends here below will think I undervalue them, if I say that their society, even that of the best of them, and in their best moments, is low and worthless, when compared with this. The pleasures are the greatest that can flow from the compleat injoyment of God the supreme good, and of all other inferior good things heaped together, that have any suitability to the powers and capacities of our exalted nature; insomuch that not the least void will be left in the happy soul, not a single desire unsatisfied, not a single sense, or faculty unmployed to its utmost extent. All they, *whose names are written in heaven*, are free of this society while they live here on earth; but Death alone actually joins them to it, and admits them into the full participation of the same joys. And certainly that person is not worthy of all this happiness, who does not think it worth dying for.

3. The manner of leaving the world, by the Soul's going out of the Body, which is implied in Death, increaseth the sad difficulty of parting. Could we be translated without seeing Death, put off mortality, and not put off the Body, as those saints shall do, who are found alive at the last day, it would be some mitigation of the sentence, a

little softening of its terror. But, alas, I shall not only go as naked out of the world, as I came into it, but more so: at my entrance into this life my Soul was cloathed, though my Body was not; at Death this garment of flesh must be laid aside, and my Soul be found naked. The addition which this makes to the terrors of Death is intimated by the Apostle *Paul*, when he says, that *we who are in this tabernacle do groan being burthened; not that we would be uncloathed, but cloathed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.* We could be glad to be dispensed from this way of exchanging this mortal life for one that is immortal.

When I leave the earth, must I leave my Body to mingle with it? Must the house, where my Soul hath dwelt, be abandoned, its form defaced, its organs become useles, the admirable frame and contexture of its parts be dissolved, and hideous deformity, and loathsome putrefaction overspread the whole? At the very thought of it, I am a terror to myself; I mourn over my Body as a man over his friend who is condemned to Death, and waiting in dreadful suspense the fatal warrant that orders his execution. Methinks, could I but be allowed to take my Body with me, I should depart more contented; the presence of my old companion would sweeten my exile, that I should
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not be so sensible of the want of my other friends : but these two bosom acquaintance, who had almost all their pleasures and pains in common, who rejoiced and mourned together, must be divided, and one of them alone outlive the separation. Thus does nature lament herself on this foreseen change, in terms of the greatest distress.

And hath *Grace* nothing to reply? Yes, abundantly enough to administer comfort to any one but the mere *natural* man. When my Body is laid in the grave, there will at once be an end of all the diseases, and pains of the Body, of its hunger, and thirst, and weariness, for *there the weary are at rest*. And my Soul, if cleansed and sanctified by the blood of Jesus, and the Spirit of God, will find no want of such a Body as this, have no cause to regret a separation, which delivers it from the darkness, the confinement, and filth of a prison, into the spacious regions of pure and heavenly light; destroys every corruption, perfects every grace, dispels every doubt, and puts it out of the reach of every temptation. And how is the Soul a loser in all this? The Soul, it is true, was made for a state of union with the Body; but not with such a Body as this. The Body of innocent man was very different from this Body of Sin and Death; and so, and indeed much more, will the Body of the glorified Saint be. As the tabernacle

in the wilderness did not more exceed the tent of the meanest *Israelite* than the Body before the fall the Body since; so the same tabernacle was not more surpassed by the temple of *Solomon* in all its glory, than the human Body, in its first and best estate, will fall short of the Body raised to honour and immortality. Of which blessed resurrection the Souls of the righteous having a certain prospect, rejoice therein; so transported with their present condition, and with looking to the things that are before them, as to forget the things that are behind, the life which they once led in the Body, and the Body itself, which they bequeathed to worms, and dust. It was this supported that *Young Gentlewoman*, whose much lamented Death is the occasion of this Funeral Discourse, in her dying moments, being heard, just before she expired, expressing her triumph over Death in those moving lines of the excellent Dr. *Watts*, which begin

* *And must this Body die?*

The morning of the resurrection, though beheld only afar off by Faith, darting its reviving beams a-cross the dark valley of Death, so as to scatter the gloomy shades, and to give sufficient ground for the application of those words of the prophet, ^k *In the evening time it shall be light.* Here it was so, the very

* Hymn 110. B. ii.

^k Zech. xiv. 7.

very moment, if I may so say, before the last remains of life's short day were swallowed up in the black night of Death. Blessed be God, who, in this sense, maketh the outgoings of the evening to rejoice.

4. The country we remove into, when we depart out of this world, is in great measure unknown to us; only we know that our way and kind of life there must be quite different from what we are accustomed to on earth; this makes us more averse to dying. There is little communication between that invisible world and ours; we have no intelligence, no advice, as we call it, from thence. Notwithstanding the many thousands that continually travel thither, we never receive any account of their reception there, of the products of the country (if I may so express it) and the customs and laws of the inhabitants; we have none sent to us with a message from the dead. After all the discoveries of the other world by one who had lived there, before he came down into this, those remote regions lie very much in the dark, and we must visit them ourselves to be able to describe them. It is true, if our own Reason was under more uncertainty than it is about these matters, yet the Gospel would not permit us to doubt of a state after Death, and that it is, in general, either very happy, or very miserable. Nay, from the Gospel we learn further,

that the blessedness of the righteous consists in the vision, or enjoyment of God, and the misery of the wicked in being eternally separated from him; but should we press to know particulars, *it does not yet appear what the one or the other shall be.* Should it be asked, how they live; we are able to return little more in answer than this, that the Soul divested of the Body must find itself in a very different condition from one that is shut up in it; must perceive and remember, feel pleasure and pain, act and be acted upon, after quite another manner; that there can be none of those arts, those occupations and delights which belong to the sons of men, because there is no foundation for them, all these things being grafted on the life of the Body. See here one reason of our backwardness to leave this world! We know this world, but we do not know the next; we have tried this life, but the future is hidden from us, and wherein it differs from this, we are not in haste to make the experiment. When persons that are about to settle in a foreign land are at their liberty where to fix, they commonly make choice of a place they are tolerably acquainted with before hand, by historical accounts of it, and where things are in the main like those that have been familiar to them, only better, if it may be, in the same kind that so the similitude of food, and dispositions, and laws and language,

guage, and manners, may help them in deceiving themselves with a pleasing imagination, that they are at home in their own country.

But, O my Soul, shall I suffer myself to be imposed upon by such foolish prejudices, as these? Shall that make me flee from Death, which ought to increase my desire of it? Death conveys me to a state of happiness; this I know, if I know myself to be in a state of grace now; and with the same degree of satisfaction, and assurance; but the particular ingredients of this happiness I do not so clearly apprehend. And should not that curiosity, which is so natural to mankind, and the spring of so many and such unwearied inquiries, work as much more strongly in this case than in any other, as the curiosity is more commendable, and we are here more certain of having it gratified to the full?

What thoughtful, contemplative mind would not willingly know after what manner angels, and separate spirits philosophize? What are the bounds of their knowledge? Or whether their knowledge hath properly any fixed bounds at all? In what cases they discover truth by a chain of reasonings; and in what by immediate intuition? And what peculiar helps and advantages they enjoy for both these? What holy Soul would not willingly know what it is to be made perfect

fect in holiness? To have no inclinations to evil? And none that are faint and languid to that which is good? To have that light, and pleasure from the Presence of God, and the most liberal communications from him flow, in full tides, into the soul; the transient glimpses, and small foretastes of which are so incomparably sweet and delightful? To be thoroughly inflamed with the love of God, and intirely satisfied with his likeness? What Soul, bowed down with infirmities, benighted with sorrows, perplexed with doubts and fears, would not willingly know, what it is to be compleatly freed from all these? That the happiness of heaven, after all the accounts and descriptions of it, remains for the most part unknown, only proves its greatness and excellence. The words which the Apostle *Paul* heard in his rapture to *Paradise* were ἀῤῥῆτα, *unspeakable*, not capable of being uttered, or made intelligible to mortals, through the scantiness of human language, and the weakness of human conceptions; so *the things that God hath prepared for them that love him, have not entered into the heart of man; and the reason is, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard any things that are like them.*

This world does not so much as afford resemblances, and comparisons, by which heavenly things may be tolerably explained, and represented; so dissimilar is their nature,
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and so unmeasurable the disproportion between things below and things above. It was a great advance for those that were born blind to be endowed by our Saviour with a new sense, and the noblest of all the senses, which nature had denied them. What an addition did this make to the dominions of the mind--- The change that happens to the Soul of a good man, passing out of this mortal life, is still more surprizing, and more for its improvement, and advantage. Are the immense spaces of the heavens, with all their hosts, as it were, lost to one, whose want of sight confines his knowledge to the few objects that he can touch with his hand? In like manner, there are ten thousand things concealed from the most knowing spirit while it is pent up in flesh, which, upon its enlargement, are immediately discovered to it; much as upon opening the window of the eye, which had been stoped up before, the Soul hath liberty to look abroad, and in vision to range thro' the heavens, the earth, and the sea. And that which should raise our notion of the future state still higher, and inflame our desire of injoying it is this, that our other senses, narrow as they are, bear more proportion to the sight, than the sight, which is so much more extensive than the other senses, does to those new ways of knowledge and fruition which Death opens to the pious Soul,

Soul, set free from its confinement in the Body.

5. Death is our removal out of this world, without all hope of a return. *We go hence, and are no more.* This makes me ready to say, *O remember that my life is wind! Mine eye shall no more see good; the eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more; thine eyes are upon me and I am not. As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more, he shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more. Therefore I will not refrain my mouth, but will ask, why hast thou made my days as an hand's breath, and my age is as nothing before thee? I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.* A thousand doors open out of this life, but not one into it from the dark territories of the grave. To those who love this world, there is something very shocking in the thought, that they must be everlastingly divorced from it. It is one thing to travel for *diversion*, or out of *curiosity*, to see strange cities and countries; another to be thrust from home by a sentence of banishment, forbidding us ever to revisit our native shore. *Death is a perpetual exile.* The same sun sets and rises, the same waters are emptied into the sea, and from thence borrowed again to supply the rivers; and thus continue in an endless cir-

circulation, but the same life is never renewed. *The days of darkness are many*; the grave devours all and restores none, till the general judgment, when men shall rise indeed, but not to dwell any more, as they now do, on the face of the earth.

And what is there so very dreadful in this sentence, that *man, when he dieth, shall return no more into this world*? If applied to the regenerate, the true meaning of it when explained is really this. They shall no more come back to a world, where *the day of their death was better than the day of their birth*; to the region of *sin and vanity, of trouble, distraction, changes, and death*. When they are settled in the promised land, they shall never be condemned a second time to tread this howling wilderness; when returned from a *seventy year's captivity*, (for such is life to them that draw it out so long, and in proportion to others who live a less time, tho' the hardships and oppressions are generally greatest, as in the bondage of *Egypt*, towards the end of it; I say, when returned to their country) they shall never go into captivity more. They never again put on their old shackles; never again repeat their old mistakes; never again commence their old warfare. They behold the face of God; and shall always behold it; they are with Jesus, and shall be ever with him; they enjoy a heaven of delights, and shall eternally

nally enjoy it ; they have the company of all those holy Souls that are gone before, or that follow, as they are continually added to the church triumphant, and shall have it forever. Some of the heathens had a notion, that Souls existed before their descent into the Body ; and when the time appointed was come for their entering into human life, they were obliged (according to the ingenious allegory of the * Poet) to drink of a river, whose waters had a quality to make them forget all that was past ; to the end they might be willing to put on an earthly Body, and submit to the inconveniencies of this mortal life. If the Soul of *Lazarus*, in the interval between his death, and his second life, to which he was raised by our Saviour, mingled with the blessed spirits above, nothing but his submission to the will of God could make him contented to forego their happy society, and take up a load he had laid down ; unless we suppose him to forget all that happened to him in his separate state, so as to awake from Death, no otherwise than if it had been an ordinary sleep. After *St. Paul* had been rapt up into the *third heavens*, he had hardly patience to stay his appointed time in the Body.

6. The circumstances that Death is sometimes attended with, render its visits improper in the apprehensions of nature, and therefore

* Virgil. *Æneid*. l. 6.

fore unwelcome. Of this kind are the circumstances of time; I mean the time of life, and place; which I the rather mention, because the affecting instance of the frailty and uncertainty of life we have lately had leads me to it. We have seen a most promising life cut off in its beginning; One *deservedly* dear to her Friends and Relatives, for her accomplishments of body and mind, crowned with religion, snatched at once from life, and them. And we cannot wonder when decrepit age would fain hide itself from Death; and *Hezekiah*, who had seen the best of life, and was in the strength of his Reason, declined its summons; we cannot, I say, justly wonder, that the Young do not often run to meet its embraces. The struggle between Life and Death is never harder than when Life is in its prime and vigour. Young Persons like what they have seen of the world so well, that they desire to be better acquainted with it; little imagining that the better acquainted with it they are, the less they shall admire it, and have the deeper conviction of its emptiness. They would advance further into the country, and fondly fancy they shall discover new scenes of delight, and find what will be more and more entertaining. There is not a greater flatterer than hope; nor are there any more easy to be flattered and deluded by it than Young Persons; for their judgments being yet but weak, their experience

rience little, their disappointments few, their passions strong, and their imaginations warm and lively, they are generally credulous, apt to have a good opinion of whatever gratifies their inclinations, to believe every thing, and to expect every thing. And how can the thoughts of Death be naturally otherwise than unacceptable to those, who have so quick a relish of the pleasures of life, and gay prospect from it?

But neither is this case without its proper consolations. “ For (that I may speak first in the person of the Young themselves) “ may I, or must I die in the flower of “ my days? If it be so decreed by the wise “ and gracious God, I submit; and the “ more readily, because what the remaining “ part of my line would be, if drawn out “ to a greater length, I cannot tell: *Days “ should speak, and multitude of years should “ teach wisdom*; and if I hearken to those “ who are much older than myself, and “ whose judgments have been ripened by “ experience, they all agree, that life is like “ a cloud which appears beautifully coloured, “ but is made up all of vapours, and engenders thunder, and lightening, and tempest, and that the world never makes good “ what it promises. The younger I die, “ the more innocent, and the sooner shall I “ be possessed of my reward; the less time “ is allotted me in the world, the less time “ there

“ there is for sin to dwell in me, and the
“ less will be my portion of trouble.”

These and such like thoughts may help to satisfy the *religious* Young. And for the *Friends* of such, who have already past a good part of the tiresome road, and know the unpleasantness of it, the difficulty of finding the right way amidst the crowds that go wrong, the snares, and dangers, and ill-treatment, that the traveller is exposed to, who have tried the world, and found it to be vanity and vexation of spirit; they, surely, have great reason, when fearing, or lamenting, the untimely Death of a Young Relative, to moderate their fears or sorrows, not knowing what events the following part of life's history might have been filled with; and knowing but too well the great likelihood that they would at best have been unsatisfying, and not answer expectation.

As for the circumstance of place, we may die at a considerable distance from home, which was the case of that *Young Gentlewoman* whom some of us attended, this last week, part of her sad journey to the tomb, where she is gathered to her fathers, and must see corruption with them. We know not the place where, any more than the time when, and the manner how, we shall die. We go abroad never to return; an ambush is laid for us on the road, or the end of our journey proves the end of our

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lives. This should teach us not to be eagerly set on our designs, nor to propose too much to ourselves in them; to regard it as our wisdom, wherever we are, to be in a readiness for Death, and to act upon a supposition that it may arrest us. And it is a satisfaction, that if we are prepared, the place where we happen to leave the world makes no difference, and is one of the last things we should trouble ourselves about. Perhaps we may be at home; perhaps abroad; perhaps in the midst of our Friends; perhaps among strangers. As Death is of all places and countries, so God is every where present, and every where the distance is the same from earth to heaven, and the passage equally safe. And if the Friends of such as die at a distance are desirous of having them laid with their kindred dust, it cannot be supposed to proceed from a belief that the Dead are any way benefited by it, or affected with it: in this sense, we may say, as the * *Philosopher* did, who being on his travels, and asked by his friends, whether, if any thing happened to him, he would be carried home to his own country, to the place of his birth, replied, *No matter; the way to the Elysian fields* (in the christian language to *Heaven*) *is the same from one place to another.* O my Soul, only chuse God for thy portion, and heaven for thy home, and give all diligence that thou be found in Christ,
and

* Cicer. Tusc. Qu. 1. 1. S. 43.

and thou mayest rest intirely easy, when and wheresoever Death presents itself to thee. I have read of a good man * that used often to say, “ That if he was to chuse a place
 “ to die in, it should be in an Inn; it look-
 “ ing like a pilgrim’s going home, to whom
 “ this world was all as an Inn, and who was
 “ weary of the noise, and confusion of it.”
 He added, “ That the officious tenderneſs
 “ and care of Friends was an intanglement
 “ to a dying man, and that the unconcerned
 “ attendance of those that could be pro-
 “ cured in such a place (*wherein the case*
 “ *of the Deceased was not at all like, hav-*
 “ *ing a tender Mother, and other Relations*
 “ *and Acquaintance about her*) would give
 “ less disturbance”; and he obtained what
 he desired. — Thus have I considered
 the principal grounds of that aversion which
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 each head have suggested such thoughts and
 reflections, as tend to quiet the heart in re-
 spect of that particular ground of trouble.

I have not said any thing of that fear;
 which the idea of Death excites as an intro-
 duction to a state of misery and punishment,
 because this is not a *merely natural*, but
guilty fear; arising from the apprehension,
 whether true or false, of unpardoned guilt,
 which, being grafted on our natural fears,

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makes

* Bp. Leighton. See Burnet’s History of his Life and Times.

makes the fruit, which before was only sour, change its kind, and become poisonous.

II. Give me leave to propose a few Rules or Directions, which may be of use to reconcile us to the thoughts of Death, notwithstanding all the reluctance, and opposition of nature against it. And here the most general and comprehensive Rule is, that we make the comforts, mentioned under the several foregoing particulars, our own; that we put it out of all reasonable doubt that they are so; and that, on the one hand, we observe and practise whatever may promote, and, on the other hand, carefully avoid every thing that may hinder the genuine influence and effect of them upon our minds: for there is nothing wanting in these comforts, to render them an over-balance to our fears, if there be nothing wanting on our part, either as to our right to them, or in our manner of applying them. But more particularly these following Rules, not excluding others, deserve our consideration and regard.

I. Let us see to it, that our state be good. That is a good state, into which, not a merely outward, but a real inward Christianity, puts us; consisting in the conversion of the heart to the love of God, and of the life to the practice of every duty he commands us; faith in Jesus, as our Mediator
and

and Advocate; an humble reliance on the merits of his Death, and an assiduous imitation of the virtues of his divine life. They alone, who are in such a state as this, have a right to the consolations before offered; they alone can know them for their good. It is for them only, who have a reasonable hope in their Death, not to be afraid of its approach. Well may Death appear terrible to others; very often such do not so properly go, as are dragged out of this life, their souls are pulled away, not resigned. And can we think this to be at all strange, if they make any reflections whither they are going? Eternity cannot but strike the Soul with trembling that stands on the edge of it, and sees nothing but the pit of destruction, opening its mouth to receive him. Astonishment almost deprives him of the use of his reason, his heart meditates terror, and, in fearful expectation of judgment, he waits the stroke that will for ever sever him from earth and heaven, from God and all good spirits, from bliss and glory. But now, the man who is reconciled to God, and taken into the charge of the great Saviour of the world, and hath received the holy Spirit, as the seal of forgiveness, and the pledge of immortality, this man may justly be allowed to triumph over that, which cannot separate him from *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the*

holy Ghost; but, instead of that, puts him into the full enjoyment of these. By the same method that prevents or removes his guilty fears, his natural fears of Death are overcome. The Christian as such hath nothing mortal about him, and is concerned with, and for nothing that is mortal. The spiritual life¹ is a flame kindled from heaven that will never be extinguished. ^m *The word of God*, the instrument of his regeneration, *abideth forever*, and the almighty efficient of this great work is the *eternal Spirit*; the *covenant* on which he builds his hopes is the *everlasting Gospel*; the *Mediator of the covenant* is made a *Priest forever*, after the power of an *endless life*, having obtained *eternal redemption for us*. The God ⁿ in whom he trusts is the *unchangeable, everliving God*; and the things he aspires to unseen, but eternal. So that here is not the least room for Death to put in its claim; it is all life, and peace, and joy, and all without end. Let us therefore put the *mortality* of the man, and the *immortality* of the Christian, one over against the other. ^o *As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field so he flourisheth, for the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more.* So far we have only the ruinous

¹ John v. 11. ^m 1 Pet. i. 23. Heb. ix. 14.
 Rev. xiv. 6. Heb. vii. 16. — ix. 12. ⁿ Rev.
 iv. 9. 2 Cor. iv. 18. ^o Psal. ciii. 15,—18.

nous face of things, where Death hath spread its conquests; read on, *but the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to such as keep his covenant, and remember his commandments to do them.* Only be in covenant with God, and keep his covenant, and you are upon a foundation which time and Death cannot destroy.

2. Let us labour after a greater disengagement from the world, and the body. Is there a necessity of our leaving this world; and do we find it hard to bring our inclinations to agree with this necessity? Let us practise a more hearty indifference to the world, and what is now difficult, will, by degrees become easy. Were this world as worthless in our esteem as it is in itself, and loved no more than it deserves, the greatest danger would then be, that we should grow weary of our stay in it, and, with a kind of impatience, wish for the time of our dismissal. We should think the world but like one of those narrow, rocky Islands, to which it was an ancient custom among the *Romans* to banish criminals, (and to which, I cannot tell, whether I have not seen it some where or other, and on some occasion or other, compared) glad to escape with the first fair opportunity. ^P*They that have*

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wives,

wives, and children, and other dear relations, would be, as though they had none; they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as tho' they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abiding it; because the fashion of this world passeth away. Must, in a little while more, this Soul of mine leave its Body, as well as I leave the world? Let me take care that my Soul be not too deeply immersed in the life of the Body; and that it do not enter too far into its interests and engagements; let me restrain the inclination to sensual delights, and by frequent denials tame, and mortify it. My Soul, thus practising an abstraction from the Body, which is a kind of moral Death, will be the better prepared for the time when the Body falls under the stroke of the natural. A life of ease, and pleasure, and fleshly indulgences, is but a sorry defence against the fears of Death; whereas, in the midst of the greatest abundance, and of carnal sollicitations, a moderate and cautious use of these things would put us out of their power, and prevent their being a hindrance to us in our removal; insomuch, that we should be able to quit the world and the body, with the like freedom as those that have nothing to lose.

With the same view we should keep our minds disencumbered with the cares of life. If our hearts are overcharged with these, the
evil

evil day will come upon us unawares. We should avoid, as much as we can, a multiplicity of worldly affairs; since the natural, and almost unavoidable, effect of these is a worldly temper; as the necessary effect of that will be a disaffection to Death, which stops us in the midst of our eager pursuits. I remember the *Historian* * tells us of an old officer under *Charles V.* who requesting a discharge from his master, that he might spend the last years of his life in quiet and devotion; and, being asked the reason of his intended retirement, replied, *inter vitæ negotia & mortis diem oportere spatium intercedere*, “that there ought to be some interval between the business of life, and the day of one’s Death:” which wise answer of his made so deep an impression on the mind of that Emperor, as to confirm him in the design he had before formed of renouncing the world himself, and passing the remnant of his days in a religious solitude; as he afterwards did. This advice is, indeed, more especially seasonable for those who are almost worn out with cares, and business; but however should be so far minded by all, as to warn them never to be intangled, and, as it were, lost in the affairs of the world; because there is no man but is liable to Death, and therefore concerned to make all prudent provision for it.

3. Let

* *Strada de Bell. Belgic.*

3. Let us seek to have our minds thoroughly penetrated, and possessed, with the belief and hope of the heavenly world; and in order to make them the more powerful in their operation, let us entertain ourselves with frequent contemplations of its glorious objects. The afflictions of time would then seem to be light, and but for a moment, and Death rather to be wished for, than dreaded, ⁹ *while we looked not to the things which are seen, but to the things that are not seen*; comparing them together, both in respect of their weight and duration; a *light*, a *momentary* affliction, with an *exceeding*, *eternal weight of glory*. I could almost venture to recommend this, as next to an infallible method of procuring ease and tranquillity to the mind, under the apprehensions of our approaching dissolution. Why should I be so anxious about leaving this world, who believe a better, and hope for a better? ^r *Faith is the evidence of things not seen*; and, by making the future world present, would annihilate this. But then faith, to be effectual, must be enforced by serious, fixed and repeated consideration of the things we believe; which, otherwise, will be as if they were not. Where meditation is added to exercise and draw forth our faith, and to actuate our hopes, it loosens the chains which fastened our hearts to this world, and renders the

⁹ 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. ^r Heb. xi. 1.

the thoughts of the last day we shall spend upon earth delightful. By drawing aside the veil, and ascending the mount of contemplation, we have communion with the Saints in light without dying; in which we are so delighted as to be willing to die, that this communion may be perfected; that we may join embraces with those, with whom we have long been of one heart and one soul; and arrive to a sort of equality in holiness with them, whose examples we have weakly imitated, by endeavouring to do the will of God on earth, as they do in heaven. By such meditations as these we learn to despise the world, which appears valuable, as the most worthless things may do, to those only who are acquainted with nothing better; and spread our wings for a flight above the stars.

4. Let us make the thoughts of Death familiar to our minds; particularly in those views of it which the Gospel hath given us. How many things are there which we know not how to bear, till use and better acquaintance have reconciled us to them? As for instance, those that have always lived in populous towns and cities, to exchange noise and hurry and company, for a state of solitude and silence in the country? So Death, as a retirement from the world, and the grave, as a solitary, lonesome recess, look more frightful at a distance than near, and at
first

first sight than after we have examined them more thoroughly; especially in those representations, which are made of Death in the Gospel of Christ; as a *release* from an 'heavy burthen, that sinks us to the grave; the *happy conclusion* of a dangerous war, which, tho' honourable, allows of no truce, and is never finally decided but by Death; a *rest from the labours* of this sinful life; and seizing on the immortal prize, at the *finishing of our course*; with respect to the body, a *sleep in Jesus*; and, with regard to the soul, *an absence from the body, that it may be present with the Lord*. How little resemblance is there between this picture of Death, and that which is drawn by sense, by guilt, and by a melancholy fancy? As often as we need to have the levity of our minds corrected, or inordinate affections repress'd, it may be of great use to set Death before us in its natural visage, and with all its black and solemn train; but when the danger is not so great on this side, as of our being unfitted by the immoderate fears of Death for the comfortable discharge of the duties incumbent on us, it is then most adviseable to view Death in another light, as transfigured by the pleasing descriptions of it in the Word of God, and the commanding power of Faith, in the Christian.

5. Let

^f 2 Cor. v. 4, and 8. 2 Tim. iv. 7. Rev. xiv. 13.
 1 Thes. iv. 14.

5. Let us often reflect that our leaving the world is a thing under the direction of unerring wisdom, and infinite love. For this thought would greatly contribute to facilitate our submission to the necessity of departing hence, when we looked on it, not as the effect of blind Fate, but the wise appointment of heaven, and result of a gracious, as well as sovereign, decree. “ Yes, I can
 “ now submit, not as of constraint, but wil-
 “ lingly; with intire satisfaction, and com-
 “ placency of soul; because I know that as
 “ there is † *a time to be born and a time to*
 “ *die*, so chance hath nothing to do with
 “ either. † *My times are in the hand of God;*
 “ he hath the keys of the visible and invisible
 “ worlds, exercises an uncontrollable domi-
 “ nion over both, orders our appearance
 “ on this earthly stage, with the parts we
 “ are severally to act, and then our disap-
 “ pearance and withdraw into another state;
 “ and does all things in the most proper sea-
 “ son. Henceforward, therefore, it shall
 “ be the least part of my sollicitude that I
 “ cannot live always in this world, and, it
 “ may be, shall not live long. I am satis-
 “ fied, I shall not go hence till I am called,
 “ and, if prepared, cannot go too soon.”

Lastly. Let us keep ourselves in a constant actual readiness for our removal. An habitual preparation every true Christian hath made;

† Eccles. iii. 2. † Psal. xxxi. 15.

made, and can therefore die with safety; but a comfortable, a joyous, a triumphant Death requires something more. And I cannot think, when our Saviour admonishes his disciples to be also ready, ^w *because they know not the day or the hour when the Son of man cometh*, that he means no more than their being in a state of favour and forgiveness with God. I make no doubt but he comprehends that care which we should all take to have our hearts united, and every grace of the divine Spirit awake, and in exercise; for thus only shall we *gird up the loins of our minds, as servants that expect the return of their Lord, and have our lamps trimmed and burning*. An immoveable steadfastness in religion, a regular course of Gospel obedience, (not patched like a garment in which there have been a thousand rents, badly sowed together again; but, like the coat of Christ, without seam from top to bottom) an equal, animated, and inlightened devotion, (not blazing for a moment, like fire in straw, or burning bright and dim by fits, like a fire not well kindled) a wise circumspection, and vigilance of behaviour; and finally, an abounding diligence in the work of the Lord; these, these are the things which must inspire us with a confidence that Death with all its alarms cannot shake. A life of strict religion will keep conscience easy and on our side,

^w Mat. xxiv. 44.

side, and conscience is the best second, as Christ is the best leader, in this last war; and if we add a spirit of devotion, which will always express itself in the constant performance of devotional duties, we shall, as it were, live out of the world, while we are in it, and, by that means, be able with less difficulty to leave it once for all at Death. Christians should converse as on the borders of eternity, and in the presence of their Judge; should maintain a fixed attention to their rule, and watch against any such temper and posture of mind, and way of life, as they would blush to have their Master find them in. And O were this their daily care, they would not dread the voice that summoned them out of this world, but cheerfully obey it, readily break off in the midst of their conversation with all things here below, and run to meet their Lord!

I shall Apply this subject in two Inferences, and a single use of Exhortation.

1. Since the Fear of Death is a natural passion, I infer the divine excellency of the Christian Religion, and singular privilege of those that profess it. For the grand question is, How we shall overcome our dread of Death, particularly under the notion of a final remove from the world, and the body; so as not, through fear of Death, to have our lives imbittered to us, and our souls in perpetual bondage? The offers and attempts

tempts of the *Poets* are not worth regarding, being at best but the slight excursions and skirmishes of wit against an enemy, too powerful to be so combated and subdued. *Reason* can direct us to no effectual remedy against these fears. Wise men in all ages have tried at it, but without success; leaving the glory of this conquest over the fears of Death to that great Person who overcame Death itself, and him that had the power of Death, that is, the Devil. Our Saviour by his precepts and example hath taught his followers the contempt of this life, and in his Gospel hath revealed to them another. And the truth is, these two had need always go together; I mean, the command to despise all the blandishments and terrors of the world, with all the threats of Death, and the doctrine of a future happy state.

I reckon him to have little right to injoin mortification and indifference to the present world, and less reason to think he shall be regarded, who hath no proposals to make of a blessedness hereafter, that will eclipse the glories, and overballance the riches and delights of time, so as to make us willing to throw them up all; and this gives us the reason of the defeat which the wisdom of men hath generally met with in its endeavours to raise the human Soul above its natural hopes and fears: but now our di-
vine

vine Master, when he calls us to forsake all that we have, either actually when Providence supplies us with a just occasion, or in the resolution and affection of our minds, and to hate our lives for his sake, may well expect to have his commands joyfully complied with, because he assures us of treasure in heaven, and that we shall find that life again to advantage, which we lose in his cause, or while we are in his service, and doing his business. He hath *brought life and immortality to light by his Gospel*, and discovered and promised sufficient to wean every one who believes in him from the love of life; which will naturally be followed with a mind fearless of Death. And, by the way, this hints a considerable difference between the Saints under the *Old Testament*, and those under the *New*, wherein the latter have manifestly the advantage. *David* when he prayed, *O spare me &c.* and *Hezekiah* in the text, betrayed a strange discomposure of mind under the apprehensions of Death; while *Stephen* amidst a shower of stones calmly breathed forth his spirit into the hands of his Redeemer: *Peter*, the night before his intended execution, slept so soundly betwixt his keepers, as not to awake, though surrounded with a miraculous light, till the Angel smote him on the side, saying to him, *arise up quickly*; and the *Apostle Paul* expresses a vehement desire to *depart*, and to be

with Christ, as far better than continuing in the body. That there was something extraordinary in these instances I freely grant; but from the reason which *St. Paul* subjoins of his desire to be dissolved, *viz. that he might be with Christ*, and the vision which the protomartyr *Stephen* had of *Jesus standing on the right hand of God*, as it were in the act to receive him, I cannot but observe, that the glorious prospects which the first Christians had into the next life, under the powerful assistances of the divine Spirit, (which we may have in proportion to the exigency of our case, as well as they) made them equally despise all that the world could do for them, or against them, and put off the Body with as much alacrity, as a man does a garment that tires and incommodes him.

2. I would from hence take occasion to mind both you and myself of the necessity, and wisdom, of a christian life. It is necessary that we may be rationally willing to die; and it is therefore wise. A religious life naturally begets peace and confidence, fortifies the mind against abject fears, purges it of low and mean desires, gives it noble views, and generous aims and hopes, and by lessening the relish and esteem of the world, diminishes the reluctance we feel in quitting it: but then its greatest usefulness is seen in entitling us to the supports, and the re-
wards

wards of the Gospel. Whoever leads a life conformable to the precepts of Christianity, may take the comfort of all that God hath promised, be satisfied of the forgiveness of all his sins, lay hold of the righteousness of his Saviour, and depend on the powerful aids and consolations of the holy Spirit, and boldly, though humbly, claim an immortal crown. And the person that can do all this need not, when the time for his departure is come, out of a foolish fondness for this worthless, sinful, transitory, life, weep fore that he must die, and not live. To conclude.

Let us be persuaded to examine what is the state of our souls with respect to the fear of Death; and resolve we will do every thing necessary to settle the repose of our minds on a right foundation. Have we conquered our fear of Death upon such principles, and by such methods, as those before advised to, so that we can think of Death, and be even refreshed and supported by the thought; or, at least, not extremely ruffled and unhinged by it? Or have we only diverted this fear by the methods of worldly and sensual prudence? If this be the case, we shall studiously shun the thoughts of Death, we shall be glad of any expedient that will help to put them aside. But now, not to observe, that these thoughts will return upon us, whether we will or no, in some circumstances,

and turn our laughter into mourning, and our joy into heaviness; not to insist on this, I would only argue from the care we take to get out of the way of such thoughts, that there is at the bottom of our souls a fear of Death, which, first or last, will surprize us like a whirlwind, that we shall not be able to resist.

Wherefore that I may know how it is with me in this important point, as I should take a review of my life, and consider what that hath been, so is it proper likewise, that I should converse a little with the idea of Death, and observe what emotions it raises in me. Let me imagine I received the same message as *Hananiab*, * *This year thou shalt die*, would it not startle me? Should I think, I had any time to spare for sinful gratifications, trifling amusements, and indulgence to sloth and inactivity? Or should I even have the least temptation to them? Let me further put the case, the message ran as that to *Hezekiab*, *Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live*; as I should reckon I had but a short time stinted me by these words, should I not be more alarmed, than on the former supposition, and be in so much hurry to dispatch my secular and spiritual affairs, to set my house and my soul in order, as to do neither of them well? Should I not, as he did, *weep sore*; or be
too

* Jeri. xxviii. 15.

too much surprized and astonish'd to weep at all? That I may reduce the thought within yet narrower bounds, let me conceive, that one sent from the dead greeted me in words like those of the apparition to *Saul*,
^y *To morrow shalt thou be with me*, joined to the congregation of the dead, thy Body a lifeless carcass, thy Soul a thin unbodied ghost; should I have more courage than he had, who, though a warrior, and familiar with the visage of Death in the field, yet *fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid?*

Yet, once more, let me imagine I heard a voice saying to me as to the rich man,
^z *This night shall thy soul be required of thee.* Let the voice be never so soft and gentle, that convey'd this awful message, O who can describe the consternation that would seize my soul; the agonies, and convulsions, worse by far than the bodily pangs of Death, which I should feel, if no better prepared for Death than this worldling, and apprehensive that I was not? How would my heart at once be cleared of all the impertinent and guilty thoughts, all the distracting busy cares, all the irregular desires and complacencies, that fill'd it the moment before? O why, though I have no such divine warning, why should I not be persuaded to think on Death, when its approach is certain, and may be

fudden? And to dwell on these thoughts till they had their proper effect upon me, to make me more diligent and exact in preparing for my latter end? Then should I have no reason to fear the thoughts of Death; or Death itself though I saw its hand lifted up to strike me to the heart. Then might I regard Death as one of the most delightful, as well as instructive, subjects I could think on; and, having made Jesus my friend, and set him continually before me in the course of my life, leave the world, not only fearless, but full of peace, and joy unspeakable.





*An Inquiry in what Sense, and upon
what Grounds, Persons, who na-
turally dread Death, may yet de-
sire not to live always.*

BEING A

Funeral Sermon

Occasioned by the

D E A T H

O F

Mrs. Prudence Welman,

I N T H E

LXXIV. Year of her Age.

1729.





T O

Thomas Welman, *Esq;*

S I R,

YOUR desire alone, without any other reason, would have been more than enough to determine me to the publishing the following Discourse; the Author being too sensible of his obligations to you for your many Favours, and in a special manner, for your Friendship, which comprizes all the rest, and gives them their greatest value, to be able to refuse so small a testimony of his readiness to serve you. But several things, besides this, have concurred; among which, the filial affection that gave rise to your request, and the sincere esteem and regard, which, together with yourself, and many others, I bear to the memory of the Deceased, were not the least considerable.

To

To these let me add, as what, I confess, had some weight with me, the near affinity betwixt the subject of this, and of a former Sermon; answering, in some sort, to the relation between the Persons whose Deaths occasioned the one, and the other; that was on the Fear of Death, as a natural passion, the grounds of it, and the remedies against it; this treats of the Desire of Death, as either faulty, innocent, or commendable, according to the different principles and causes which it flows from; that was preached for an agreeable and beloved Niece; this for a pious, and much respected Parent.

In an age wherein serious Religion is so generally out of fashion, especially among those of plentiful fortunes, it is with a great deal of pleasure I see this Stranger taken in, and respectfully entertained by two kindred families, whose highest interest I am not more strongly bound to seek, by the Ministerial relation which the Providence of God hath placed me in to them, than I am heartily disposed to rejoyce in it, and in their welfare and prosperity of every kind.

May it always be a part of your character, that you know how to enjoy the word, without being insnared by the temptations of it; and to use it so as to have the noblest satisfaction

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faction it can be the occasion of, which is that of doing good; and being able to regard the best things in it as earnest, indeed, in company with the Grace of God, but yet as very poor and disproportioned ones, of heavenly and eternal blessings.

I am

S I R,

With the greatest Sincerity,

Your most Obliged

Humble Servant,

HENRY GROVE.





S E R M O N VIII.

On what Grounds we may desire no
to live always.

J O B vii. 16.

I would not live always.

THERE is reason to conclude from the essential goodness of the divine Nature, that all those numerous evils which infest this mortal life, had their original entirely from man himself. That man would not have known sin, if he had not made an ill use of his liberty, is most certain; as it is further highly probable that pain, and sorrow, and Death, would never have come into the world, if sin had not entered first, and thereby made a wide breach for them to follow; the beginning of evil, both moral and penal, being as when one leteth out water, its first eruption might have easily been prevented, but after that it spreads like a deluge.

And

And yet we must not argue, that because sin is the effect of man's free choice, and suffering the effect of sin, they that suffer most are therefore the greatest finners. This would be both a rash and a false judgment, since we read in *Scripture* of two that were emphatically *Men of sorrow, and acquainted with grief*; one of them stiled by him that knoweth the hearts of all, ^a *A perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil*; the other ^b *Tempted in all points, like as we are, yet without sin*; the former chosen out for an example of suffering affliction to all generations; the other set forth not only as the most complete model of virtue and holiness that ever was, but an all-sufficient Sacrifice for sin.

^c *Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.* If his trials had not been uncommon, his patience would not have been so remarkable, nor his end so happy and honourable; his was not like the affected patience of the *Stoicks*, a fullen pride, and stubbornness of soul, but the humble resignation of a faint and child of God; ^d *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.* As one that had a tender feeling of every stroke, he pours out his complaints in all the

^a Job i. 1. ^b Heb. iv. 15.

^d James v. 11. ^c Job i. 21.

the eloquence of woe. But then, the character of no mere man being absolutely perfect, he sometimes carries his complaints too far; there is too much of the infirmities of the man in them. So, I doubt, there is in some of the expressions made use of in this Chapter; as particularly where he says, *I will not refrain my mouth, I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou setest a watch over me? When I say, my bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint, then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me with visions; so that my soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life; I loath it, it is my greatest aversion, I would not live always, or, I am not to live always; but must shortly die; and I would die presently, let me alone, for my days are vanity, take the breath which thou hast given; ° Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit; and what is man that thou shouldest magnify him, that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment? Let me beseech thee to put a speedy end to my days, since they † flee away and see no good. This is not like the Saviour of the world, when, in a much greater agony, he prayed, saying, ‡ O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* What was wanting in the first

• Job x. 12. † Job ix. 25. ‡ Mat. xxvi. 39.

first of these patterns, let us supply from the latter; and while we praise and imitate whatever we see commendable in every sincerely pious and good person, and make all favourable allowances for the failings of such, out of regard to their superior virtues, and *considering ourselves lest we also be tempted*, let us *implicitly*, and *wholly* follow none but the Son of God.

When afflicted *Job* saith, *I would not live always*, he is not to be understood *absolutely*, as renouncing all hope of immortality, and desirous to return to the same state he was in before he was born. As he was a man, a Being in whom an ardent thirst of happiness is found, with an idea or notion of a duration without end, he could not but join these two together, and wish, at least, to be for ever happy. It could not be an indifferent thing to him *to be*, or *not to be*, much less could he look upon the latter of these, as in itself rather to be chosen than the former. And if as a man, certainly then as a good man much more, he must breathe after life and immortality. He could not love God with any fervency of affection, and, at the same time, think with pleasure of passing into a state, in which he should love him no more, and never more have any knowledge and injoyment of him. Let us suppose him willing to resign his Being, *abstractly taken*, yet surely he could not be
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contented to part with what was dearer to him than life itself, *the capacity to love and converse with God*; and consequently he could not be easy to give up his Being, which was the foundation of all intercourse with the supreme object of his felicity.

It is true, from his description of Death and the grave in several places of this book, and, particularly, in the third Chapter, one would imagine that he longed to be swallowed up in utter silence and forgetfulness; *Why died I not from the womb? Then should I have lain still, and been quiet; I should have slept, and been at rest. As an bidden untimely birth I had never been; as infants who never saw the light; there the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest.* But, in all this, he only indulges a melancholy imagination, which, representing the grave to him as a place of refuge, where none of the bitter storms of life could reach him, made him talk as if he had for a time forgotten there was another state beyond Death. The repose which his Body, quite tired with its burthen, would find in the dust appeared so desirable to him, that he speaks nothing of any other rest that he expected: from whence if we should presently conclude that he believed and expected none, we should reason very wrong; it being impossible that one who had such just apprehensions of God and religion, and was no

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stranger to particular revelations from him, could be ignorant of a life to come; or think the rest of the grave comparable to the rest of the Soul in the bosom of divine love; or that he could give up his Body itself to corruption, without all prospect of a time, however distant, when it should be redeemed from the dishonours of the grave, and neither suffer or die any more. Accordingly, besides many hints of a future Resurrection to be met with in the Book of *Job*, there is one passage so full to this purpose, with regard to the words, that a Christian could not express his sentiments and hopes in more lively and significant language; *I know that my Redcemer 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 shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.* And why should we restrain these words, which are so exceeding proper to express the doctrine of the Resurrection, that better could not have been chosen, to signify the hope which *Job* had of seeing an end of his troubles in this life; an event which, if foreseen by him, falls so much short of the propriety, strength and loftiness of the expressions? Especially, when we further consider, with what solemnity they are introduced;

^h *Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven, with an iron pen and lead, in the rock forever!* And I do not know why it should not have some weight with us, at least to shew the sense of the ancient Jews in this matter, that in the *Septuagint* Translation of the Book of *Job*, after these words, *So Job died, being old, and full of days*, it is added, *but it is written, he shall rise again with them whom the Lord doth raise*; for to what is this so likely to refer as to the faith of *Job* delivered in the passage before cited? We must, therefore, fix on this as his true and whole meaning in the words of the text, “ That he would not *live always in the present world*; in the circumstances he was now in, he had enough of it, and was ready to leave it as soon as God should please; the sooner, in his opinion, the better; the time seemed long and tedious, while he was waiting for his dismissal; so earnestly did he desire to be gone. ”

But then in speaking thus, *Job* doth not express the sense of all, neither, perhaps, not of the much greater part of mankind. There are those who, if the matter was left to their choice, would be for spending their immortality upon earth. Of this number are all sensual ungodly sinners, who have

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the means of gratifying their appetites to the full, and withhold not from them any joy. These men are apt to fancy, that could they make their worldly prosperity eternal, they should be eternally happy; and have nothing further to wish for, being perfectly easy and well satisfied in the circumstances of their Being; though, herein, they are undoubtedly mistaken. For, alas, the ground of all that pleasure and amusement which carnal minds have in these things, is their novelty; so that, in leangth of time, and much more in eternity, these vanities would lose all their imaginary charms, and appear to be what they are, of little or no real value. I may appeal to those who are the greatest admirers of *riches*, or *honour*, or *sensual pleasure*, whether they have so great an opinion of these things after they have enjoyed them for some time, as they had at first; whether the delight they afford them doth not continually lessen, (however their dotage, from the influence of custom, may increase) and would not therefore, as is probable, intirely vanish away, were they only to enjoy them for some thousands of years; and even turn into a loathing and disgust of their reason, for them, if there was to be no end, and no change of their enjoyments; and whenever this happened, that these false goods had lost all their amiableness in the eyes of those who had most partially esteemed, and eagerly pursued

pursued them, they would then be sensible of their want of some other more real and substantial good, which they had neglected when it was attainable by them, and of their folly in neglecting, and misery in wanting it; and so would pine away in fruitless remorse, and endless despair. However still, thus much is evidently true, that as long as their notions, and inclinations, as flowing from their notions, continued the same, they would prefer living always after the manner they do, senseless and brutish as it is, before wholly ceasing to be, or removing into another world, where no entertainments were to be had like those of the present life. And whereas many of the ungodly do not prosper in the world, but lead a wretched as well as a sinful life, (which, by the way, aggravates the guilt of persisting in a course which hath so little temptation attending it) yet even these, till they are driven by the extremity of anguish and distress, chuse *to live here always*, in hope of seeing better days, rather than to exchange their present lot for one more miserable, and hopeless too.

But though every one is not of *Job's* mind, when he says, *I would not live always*, that is, *in this world*, yet a great many are; and upon one account, and from one principle, or other, can use the same words. And that I may comprehend all who join in this language, how much soever they may

differ in the temper of mind with which they utter it, I shall consider it in these following views, *viz.* as the language of *Discontent*—the language of *Nature*—the language of *Reason*—and finally, as the language of *Grace*.

I. This is, too often, the language of *Discontent*, of which there are two kinds, and of different degrees of guilt.

The first, and generally the least excusable, is, when men have no good reason to be weary of life; and would not be so, if they were not under the influence of some intemperate and ungoverned passion, which makes them fall out with their Being, and in haste to be rid of it. It may be questioned, whether *Elijah* was altogether guiltless in this matter, who when he was obliged to flee into the wilderness, in order to hide himself from the rage of *Jezabel*, after having wandered disconsolate and solitary, sat himself down under a tree, and requested that he might die, saying, ¹ *It is enough now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers;* and why therefore should my life be drawn out to such a length, when they have fallen sacrifices to the malice of bloody persecutors? In this instance, though there seems to be a mixture of discontent

¹ 1 Kings xix. 4.

content, yet that is so much less perceivable than the Prophet's timorousness, and dejection of spirit, that a very small degree of charity will serve to cover this failing of his.

The next instance, which is that of *Jeremiab*, will not, I fear, admit of so easy an apology; his passion, occasioned by the contempt and ill usage he met with, prevailing so far over his reason as to carry him not only ^k to curse the day in which he was born, but even the person who brought the first tidings of his birth to his father. But the most remarkable example of all, and most unaccountable in respect of the little occasion that was given for his uneasiness, was *Jonab*, who was so exceedingly displeas'd at God's having sent him to threaten the people of *Nineveh* with speedy destruction, and then stopping the execution upon their repentance, that he puts up this strange prayer, *Therefore now, O Lord, take I beseech thee, my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live*; not that it was so now more than at any other time; but what led him to judge so was his being too tender of his own reputation, which he was afraid would suffer by the seeming disagreement between the prophecy and the event. And just after this, when he began to return to a right temper, he did not long keep in it; but, upon the withering of the gourd, under the sha-

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* Jer. xx. 7. and 14,—18.

dow of which he had set with much delight, and being exposed, without defence to the burning winds, and the fervent rays of the sun which beat upon him, ¹ *He fainted, and wished within himself to die, and said, as before, it is better for me to die than to live*; as, perhaps, it would have been, if he had been doomed to live always in that unsheltered condition; but when, by only changing place, he could have avoided the inconvenience complained of, his Prayer was not the effect of his Devotion, and Submission to God, but of his Peevishness. These examples were not designed to encourage us in a like temper, but to shew us the weakness of human nature, and that the best of men, and those who by the sacredness of their character are most raised above others, are yet ^m *subject to like passions* with them.

We should have more cause to be surprized at this behaviour of the persons now mentioned, if we had not so many instances before us, that too nearly resemble it, especially among those of a fretful and uneasy disposition. How common is it for some, as often as they meet with any little disappointment in life, are crost by their fellow-creatures, or by the Providence of God, or have not every thing just to their wish, presently to lose the possession of their souls; and sometimes to be transported so far as to cry out, *I am weary*

¹ Jonah iv. 8.^m James v. 17.

wearry of my life; if I must be perpetually vexed and disturbed thus, what good will my life do me? And were they asked, as *Jonah*, *Dost thou well to be angry?* They would be ready to answer as he, *I do well to be angry even unto Death*; so displeas'd with life, as to think Death the greater blessing. And yet after all they may thank their own foolish and impotent passions for this vexation of spirit; *they disquiet themselves in vain*, are their own tormentors, and do not really know what they would have; for, as much as they may seem to court Death, was Death to come at their request, like the man in the fable, they would most of them presently reverse their petition. We may justly call this *a spirit of Discontent*, to which every one should be cautioned not to give way, least at length, through the righteous judgment of God, it should gain so much the ascendant over them as to make them wish for Death in earnest, after having so long trifled with it; if not to do that in the rage of passion which nothing but the absence of Reason can excuse, and no after-repentance can remedy.

When the condition of a person is such that, upon a sober view of things, Death appears preferable to life, which is the other case, yet discontent may have too great a share in his prayers and supplications to God for a discharge. And whether this be so as

to himself in particular, any one that is willing may easily know.

Do my sufferings breed impatience, so that I do not reflect as I ought to do on the wise ends which God hath in prolonging my trial, and appointing it to be so severe; nor take the care I should to answer these ends; nor submit to the divine will with the intire acquiescence of my own? This shews, however sure I am of my own integrity, and that a merciful God will not impute such my infirmities to me, that I ought to blame myself for them; and may convince the most eminent christians of the need they have to be watchful over their own spirits, when the hand of God lies heavy upon them, and to pray with still more earnestness *that patience may have its perfect work*, and not fail them till life itself doth. If the *Scripture* speaks only of the *patience* of *Job*, it was not because he was never guilty of the least *impatience*; particularly in hating his life. Doth *Job* curse his day? Ask, *wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul? And beg of God to let loose his hand, and cut him off?* And is there no mixture of *impatience* in all this? It is but too evident there was; and so likewise in his complaint in the text, and the verses preceding and following; but all this is passed by, to shew that the Lord is gracious, and merciful, that *he knoweth our*

our frame, and remembereth that we are dust, and delighteth to incourage and reward the sincere, though imperfect, virtue of them that love him, and keep his commandments.

II. We may conclude this as the language of *Nature*, for so it is sometimes, though not very often, "*I would not live always.*" *Is my strength the strength of stones? Or is my flesh of brass?* Far otherwise. *Human Nature* is a poor, infirm thing, and, like a flower of the field, to which it is compared in scripture, bends beneath the showers, and is quite broked with the storms of Adversity. The account given of mortal men is, that ° *They dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth.* Now when *the life of man is spent with grief, and his years with sighing, when his strength faileth because of his iniquity, and his bones are consumed,* and the only door of hope left is that which opens out of this life, that is, the gate of Death, it is not strange if he waits to see the door opened, that he may fairly make his escape. The tired *traveller* that can go no further may be allowed to lie down, and rest; the *mariner*, to whom the deaf and furious tempest hath left nothing but a narrow plank, to look towards the shore. And may not nature claim the privilege of humbly desiring

° Job vi. 10.

° Job iv. 19.

firing, and petitioning for a release, though it must not do any thing to hasten it, when it is oppressed with a load of sorrow and affliction, under which it sinks to the grave? Perhaps a thought may here arise, is not Death terrible to nature? And can it be natural to *fear* Death, and to *desire* it too? In different respects it may. It is not more natural to dread the period of our Beings, than to desire the period of our woes; and, consequently, when it is apprehended that Death only can end them, and that, as ending our complaints it will prove a greater good, than it can be accounted an evil as it terminates our existence, nature itself will lay down its neck, to receive the fatal blow. But then, that we might not be tempted to anticipate the appointed time, it is wisely provided by the Author of nature, that for the greater part, as long as there is *life* there should be *hope*, not barely of a longer, but of a happier, at least easier, life; by which means, the fear of Death exerts itself with greater power, having nothing to counterbalance it, and is the cause that men love that life, and endeavour to preserve it, which they are willing to believe and hope will not always be so afflicted and troublesome, as it is at present. This, indeed, can hardly be expected by those who stoop under the weight of years; which, one would think, should make it *natural* for all *old people* to be

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more than contented to die; for, as an ancient Moralist * observes, what can happen out that is more according to nature than the Death of such? And again, Nature, saith he, hath a fixed measure, as in all other things, so in living; and yet, we see it is otherwise: Nature staggers under its burthen, but is seldom willing to lay it down, unless some other calamities, besides those which are the usual attendants of *old age*, be added to break off the engagements with life; they are *full of days*, in the language of *scripture*, yet not *satisfied with long life*, nor disposed to rise from table, like grateful guests, when they have eaten as long as they had an appetite left. † But if Nature in this case doth not know that Death is in season, Reason does. Of which I shall have occasion to speak under the next particular.

III. These words, *I would not live always in this world*, are the voice of *Reason*. The desire of a more than ordinary length of days upon earth, for its own sake, cannot flow from Reason; much less the desire of an immortal life in such an imperfect state as this is. ^P *Man, in his best estate, is altogether vanity*. It is but an empty shew, when finest, that he converses with, and a narrow circle to which he is confined. And

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* *Cicero de Sen.* † *Seneca.* ^P *Psal. xxxix. 5.*

is he so in love with *Vanity* that he would have it perpetuated? Would he continue to be a spectator of the same idle and distracted scene; and forever tread the same dull round? If we consider this life apart from the relation it stands in to another, what is there in it that will bear the test of repeated experiments, and of a long, not to say an everlasting, acquaintance? What is there of which a wise and thinking man would not quickly discern the worthlessness and insignificancy, so as to be full of it in a few years conversation, and heartily sick, if not ashamed of it, in a few ages? To eat, and drink, and sleep; to go out, and come in; rise up to labour, and lie down to rest; to receive, and pay, unprofitable visits, too often worse; to be full and grow hungry; to have the returns of the same low appetites, and mean pleasures in the gratification of them; to laugh, and weep, and both from the same trifling causes; to be ever in motion towards happiness and satisfaction, and never to arrive at it, hardly, to approach any thing nearer; to live in ignorance, which is next to not living at all; or with a great deal of pains to get just knowledge enough to see our want of it, and to give us a quicker sense of the vanity, and misery of life; what is there so desirable in all this, that Reason should be captivated by it, and not judge the time allotted for such a state of
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of things sure long enough? Hear how a *Heathen* * talks upon this subject; “ All
 “ things in all times have been alike, and
 “ proceeded in a round; and therefore it
 “ makes little difference whether a man sees
 “ the same things for a hundred, or two
 “ hundred, years, or an interminable time.
 ---§ “ As thou findest thyself affected at
 “ the diversions of the Theatre, and such
 “ like places, where the same things being
 “ constantly and uniformly represented cause
 “ satiety in the spectators, after the same
 “ manner shouldest thou be affected in life.
 “ For turn things which way you will, up or
 “ down, on this side, or that, they are the
 “ same things still, and spring from the same
 “ causes. When, therefore, wilt thou say,
 “ *it is enough?*” He was an *Emperor* who
 made these reflections; a *Roman Emperor*,
 who had legions at his command, and every
 thing else but content and happiness: and a
 greater than he for wisdom, as well as upon
 a level with him in respect of *royalty*, fixes
 the change of vanity upon human things,
 for the like reason; [¶] *The thing that hath
 been, it is that which shall be; and that which
 is done, is that which shall be done; and there
 is no new thing under the sun.* They who say
 such things must have been of the same mind
 with him **, who protested, “ that if it
 “ was

* *Anto. Lib. 2. S. 4.*§ *Lib. 6. S. 46.*¶ *Eccles. i. 9.*** *Cicero de Sen.*

“ was offered him to return back to infancy, and live over the same days again, he would earnestly refuse it;” as I believe a great many others would, if they were not to correct their former follies and faults, but to repeat them over again.

And if the best estate of man, as we have seen, is vanity, when the members of his *body*, and the faculties of his *mind*, his *senses*, his *imagination*, his *memory*, his *reason*, are in the greatest vigour and perfection, what is his worst estate, when he is fallen, or falling into decay? What pleasure there is in life mostly depends upon the strength and vivacity of the faculties, and their being in right order for conversing with, and enjoying their proper objects; and it must be owned, when this is the case, that the delights of a reasonable mind employed in the contemplation of God and his works, in offices of kindness, and good will to men, and in the exercises of virtue and piety, are of no little value: but *age*, which brings on a melancholy change in the mind, as well as the body, clouding its brightness, and impairing its force and activity, must of consequence in a great measure incapacitate us for these which are the most valuable, that I may not say, the only valuable pleasures in human life. And can it be the voice of *Reason* that a man should be exceeding desirous

fireous of living till he is become like a ruinous house, and the candle which inlightened the innermost parts of it, is sunk into its socket, and burns as if it was just expiring? After the glory of a man, his Understanding, is departed; or only the poor remains survive, the man, now hardly such, may hug life faster than ever; but that is only thro' instinct, or the force of habit and custom, and because he hath not *Reason* enough left to advise him better.

Nay, was this decay in our faculties never to happen, yet forasmuch as it is reasonable to believe, that in another world we shall have greater advantages for the improvement of our minds, and the successful pursuit of *truth, virtue, and felicity*, they that listened to *Reason*, would choose to be transplanted into that world, that they might make the trial, rather than always continue in the non-age of their Beings. Now this advantage of the next life above this in point of perfection, which *Reason* makes probable, is by the testimony of *divine revelation* become indisputably certain. Which brings me, in the last place,

IV. To consider these words as the language of *Grace*. *I would not live here always*, may every good christian truly say, and cannot but say, if he knows himself for what he is, a child of God, and an heir of

the heavenly glory. Of this we have an eminent example in the Apostle *Paul*, who having faithfully served his beloved Master, had ^r *a desire to depart, and to be with him*, being well satisfied that he should be accepted of him, and received into his joy, which was *far better* in respect of his own private interest and happiness, than to stay in the body. *Grace* is an *immortal principle*, an *incorruptable seed*, the *life of God in the soul*, which can never be extinguished; but instead of that gets strength with time, and spreads and flourishes to eternity; and being the *offspring of God*, and derived from heaven, it must be still mounting upward, and endeavouring to unite with its source and center. Christians are ^t *born from above*, and therefore ^t *set their affections on things above, and not on things on the earth, being themselves dead, and their life hid with Christ in God*. It must be confessed indeed, that souls the best prepared for heaven, may, through the infirmity of the flesh, or the weakness of their faith and hope, or a tender concern for some whom they must leave behind them in the world, be willing to live a little longer; but, in case they had a prospect of continuing in the world not a few *years*, but for many *ages* to come, they would be quite disheartened thereby; and whatever backwardness they may now discover to

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^r Phil. i. 23. ^t John iii. 3. ^t Col. iii. 2, 3.

part, when the moment for it is come, they would, did they know beforehand their salvation to be so far off, have no life or spirit left them; they would not be able to think with any patience of so tedious an absence from their Lord and Saviour, of dragging about with them a body of sin and death so long, and continuing so long in a state of imperfect knowledge, and more imperfect grace and holiness; and much more, if they were told by a messenger from heaven, that they must depart out of life this hour, or forever after be chained down to it, they would not be in the least strait what to choose, but instantly put themselves into a readiness cheerfully to follow their heavenly Guide. The particular grounds of this preference of a *heavenly* to an *earthly* immortality, (some of which I have just now hinted at) are these following.

1. There is in every Being a principle which makes it tend to its proper perfection; and in the same proportion as this principle is more active, and the perfection of the Being of a nobler kind, the stronger is that tendency. Now *Glory* is the perfection of *Grace*; and as nothing can be so active as *Grace*, or so excellent as *Glory*, *Grace*, with incessant indeavours, will be reaching after *Glory*. Here every thing in the *new creature* is imperfect, his knowledge and love of

God, and his likeness to him. In that world, to which he is going, he shall *know as also he is known*, and love to the utmost stretch of his capacity; he shall be ^u *satisfied when he awakes with the perfect likeness* of the eternal God, the great original of beauty and excellence; and when the Son of God ^w *shall appear, he shall be like him, because he shall see him as he is*. Here he is ever offending the God whom he loves, there he shall love him too well to offend him any more. ^x Here sin *dwells*, though it doth not *reign*, in his mortal body, there having put off his body, he shall find himself free from all his inclinations to sin, and never more complain that he *does what he hates*. Here if he doth not sin, yet he is tempted to it, which *vexes his righteous soul from day to day*, and breaks the peace and tranquility of his life, there he shall be as free from temptation as he is from sin; having no tempter in his own bosom, and that *wicked one* who is called *the Tempter*, being banished from those blissful regions, never to be admitted there more. O the inconceivable difference between the future state of the saints and the present! Now their minds are weak and narrow, covered with thick darkness, and labouring under manifold prejudices; then they shall be brightened and clarified, no spot left remain-
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^u Psal. xvii. 15.^w 1 John iii. 2.^x Rom. vi. 12.

ing upon the eye, no imperfection of any kind in the sight. Now the Will in the very best of men is corrupted, they do not *follow God fully*, (taking those words in the strictest sense) their hearts are divided, and though God hath the greater part, and in the charitable language of scripture, *the whole*, yet it must be confessed with grief that their affections are too much at the command of other things; in heaven this contest for the heart of man, between the Creator and the creature shall be at an end; God shall have all he challenges, the heart shall own his right, rest upon him, cleave to him, delight in him. *Whom have I in heaven but thee?* Is the language of the holy soul in heaven. Here is every thing to please, all is lovely and delightful; but it is thy presence, O Lord, that makes it to be so; their brightness is but a shadow of thine, their beauty a reflection of thine, their goodness a drop of thine! My heart desired none but thee upon earth, and now I have what I so long desired. I have found him whom my soul loves, with whose perfections myriads of blessed Spirits are enamoured; we have found him, and we will never let him go—But this belongs more properly to the next particular, to which I shall proceed, after having observed that the reason why I have not mentioned any thing of the afflictive evils of life, such as Fear, and Pain, and Grief

for worldly crosses and disappointments, is that *Nature* carries men to seek rest from these; whereas I am now speaking of those desires, which in a more peculiar manner take their rise from a principle of *Grace*; and because too, to those who *seek first the kingdom of heaven and the righteousness thereof*, an exemption from all these evils shall be added of course, that there may be nothing to hinder the soul from giving itself intirely to the divine pleasures which that world abounds with.

2. The hope which gracious souls are at present begoten to of the compleat fruition of the supreme good, begun only in this life, makes them protest with the greatest earnestness against living always upon earth. In this world the injoyment of God is begun, and there is something so unspeakably sweet in this distant converse with the all-perfect Being, that they cannot be at rest till they *see him face to face*, and are received into the most secret recesses of his love. There are a great many *pleasures*, such as they are, besides this, in this lower world, but no *satisfaction*. The pleasures of *sin* are turbulent and disquieting, and the pleasures of *sense*, whether sinful or not, either tasteless, or cloying; but now the delights that flow from communion with God are divine, they penetrate to the inmost part of the soul, and because they please our better part, are therefore

fore always pleasing; whereas what is founded in fancy, will please and displease by turns, as the fancy happens to change. What more godlike pleasure can there be than to survey infinite fulness and perfection? What more contenting than to be able to add, all this goes to the making up of my portion? What so refreshing as to feel his presence enlivening all the powers of my nature, whose power is the stay of the whole creation, and his favour the happiness of the reasonable part of it? If this imperfect state will not admit of the good man's being always in transports, he yet enjoys a repose and serenity, a smooth and cordial joy, which far exceeds all other pleasures; all other pleasures, I mean, that mortals are acquainted with, but falls as much short, and even more, of the pleasures of immediate vision, and of compleat union and enjoyment. There is to be a time when *God shall be all in all*; all things in all persons; he shall be in all *angelical* and *human* spirits that inhabit those bright mansions, diffused through all, as a quickening soul, actuating all; he shall be in every one, and every one shall find him to be all; all that they can wish and desire, all that they can conceive, all that is adorable, excellent, kind, and good; they shall find all summed up, after a most perfect manner, in One God; all the reasons of

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existence, all the ideas of truth, all the examples or patterns of beings, all the springs of pleasure, all the names and denominations of good.

God is not barely the *object* of the heavenly felicity, but the *author* of it too. Seeing of God is an act of the Soul. And we cannot imagine that the Soul will have no other pleasures but those which result from an act of its own; it is not credible that the Soul alone should be active, and God only offer himself as the object of its contemplations. We are to conceive of a vital energy, or operation, continually proceeding from God, a perpetual influence, not unheeded by us as now, but attended with the most exquisite perceptions of delight. He created the Soul; he understands its frame; he can derive happiness to it by all its faculties, not barely such a happiness as follows upon the natural exercise of these faculties, but a happiness that is caused by the impressions he makes on them. And who, with the *tongue of Angels*, could describe the blessedness that must arise from this intercourse of created spirits made perfect with the uncreated Spirit, the all-perfect, almighty, all-sufficient God of spirits, acting with the utmost rectitude, and vigour of all their powers, and acted, without ceasing, by that Being who is light and life and love? This is what the christian hopes for; and this hope of the perfect and everlasting fruition of God

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is better to him than all the possessions of the world could be without it; I believe I may say, affords more joy to the mind than the present imperfect injoyment of the same divine object can do. What more excellent than the *object* of this hope, the ever-blessed God, manifesting himself in the impresses and reflections of his divine attributes? What more firm and stable than the *foundation* of this hope, the immutable promise of God? But then let this hope be never so precious, a man would not always live in a state of unaccomplished hope. Hope in its very nature betrays want, supposes absence, and adds wings to the desires; and therefore while it makes a person happy in some degree, must needs be inconsistent with perfect happiness; such as is that of the saints in light, who are too happy to be capable of hope, properly so called, and too secure of the continuance of their happiness to fear.

3. *Grace* cannot but vent itself in the language of the text, on the account of the near relation which the christian hath to the upper world. On earth the people of God are, and ever were *strangers* and *pilgrims*, as perhaps they would have been, in some regard, in *paradise* itself, from whence they would have been translated, after the appointed time of their trial had been ended, to higher mansions. But then this world, had not sin entered, though it might have been
but

but a place to sojourn in for a while, would not have been an hostile country as it now is. Now the christian lives both among strangers and enemies, enemies to God, and enemies to his soul; but this is his comfort that he shall not always do so; his home is in heaven, that is his father's house, his true, if not his native, country, where he hath his *conversation* and freedom now, and shall, at last, behold that dear, that divine, Person, his Saviour, and, as he condescends to style himself, his *Friend* and *Brother*, whom he loves more than all. ² *Him having not seen he loves*; but because he loves him, he cannot be contented never to see him. Let the hand of *Death* draw the veil that separates him from that sight, since that is the only way in which it can be done. There he shall have the society of Angels, those superior beings, those friendly and ministering spirits, to whom he hath been obliged for a thousand kind offices, they did him unseen, in the course of his pilgrimage. Thither his best friends are gone, or will shortly go, where he shall see them gathered in one general assembly with all those faithful witnesses of God that have lived in the several ages of the world; every one glorious and happy, with *Jesus* at their head, in *glory*, as in *merit*, transcending all. And is there that christian (I mean one that is truly such) who

² 1 Pet. i. 8.

who will say, *he had rather live always in this world*, where he is gazed on as a foreigner in the dress and manner of his conversation, and hath his very Being, and short abode, grudged him, rather than join that blessed society? Is there one, so much as one, to be found, who while his kindred souls are taking their flight all around him from the several parts and regions of the earth, would be left behind, and settle here forever, if it could be done? No certainly; if there be any thing agreeable in his present situation, that which makes it so, next to the shinings of God's face, is the presence and conversation of christian friends, of those who are *of one heart*, and, as to the main things, *of one mind*, with himself, embarked in the same interest, and travelling to the same place, where he hopes to meet, and dwell with them forever. He hath the satisfaction to *walk in company with these to the house of God*; or to know that they are living upon earth, and that they are the *salt* and the *light* of it; and to join with them *in spirit*, in acts of prayer and praise on each other's behalf, and all other parts of worship suitable to the militant state. Were all these gone, what a wearisome place would the world be? More unhappy than *Lot in Sodom* he would cry out in the affectionate language of the divine *Psalmist*, ^a *O that I had*

^a Psal. lv. 6.

300 *On what Grounds we may* VOL. I.
had wings like a dove, then would I fly away
and be at rest.

One thing that occasioned *Elijah's* request that God would take his life from him, seems to have been his apprehension, that the children of Israel having forsaken his covenant, and ^b thrown down his alters, and slain his prophets with the sword, he only was left; all the prophets, as he thought, being killed, and few or none of the people to be found who had not *bowed the knee to Baal*. And the like observation may be made concerning the *mourning Prophet* ^c, who, on a view of the great calamities and universal corruption of the Jewish people, breaks forth into this passionate exclamation; *Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of way-faring men, that I might leave my people and go from them!* Now if a scarcity, and much more the total want of the true worshipers of God, and lovers of Jesus, would make this earth appear so dismal to the solitary christian, must not the consideration that heaven is inhabited by none but pure and happy spirits, *a multitude without number*, inflame and draw forth his desires after that state of consummate holiness, and endless felicity?

4. *God*

^b 1 Kings xix. 14.

^c Jer. ix. 1, 2.

4. ^d God hath wrought the souls of the faithful to the self same thing, and giving them the earnest of the Spirit. In this fleshly tabernacle they groan, being burthened with their manifold wants and sins and sufferings; and having ^e received the first fruits of the Spirit, they groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption, that is to say, the redemption of their bodies, and the compleat and everlasting salvation of their souls. This divine Spirit, by a light which he sheds upon the mind, inables them more clearly to discern their title to the heavenly blessedness; and by so doing, excites in them more fervent desires after it. By assisting the soul in its self-inquiries, and whispering the love of God to it, this good Spirit ^f beareth witness with their spirits that they are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ; fills them with heavenly hope, and sometimes, though not often, doth so invigorate and enlarge their hope that it grows up into full and triumphant assurance. And then nothing but the prospect of being yet further serviceable to the cause and interest of their Redeemer can reconcile them to a longer stay in the body. The same almighty Spirit refreshes pious souls at some *festival* times (if I may so call them) with more exuberant fore-

^d 2 Cor. v. 4, 5.^e Rom. viii. 23.^f Rom. viii. 16, 17.

foretastes of heavenly bliss; as when they are entered into the depth of holy meditation, are pouring out their desires in secret before the throne of God, or commemorating the Saviour of the world at his Table, with the remembrance of whose dying love they are even carried out of themselves; on such special occasions, I say, the Spirit of God opens all the springs of sacred joy, which here upon, does as it were swell and overflow the soul. And in those distinguishing moments (for, oh, like moments they suddenly pass away!) how worthless doth the world appear, and every thing in it by which it seeks to win its affection, and to invite its stay. Oh, when shall I come and appear before God in his temple above? When shall I drink of the fountain of life, that I may never thirst more?—These then are the causes, by one, or more, or all, of which men are led to desire their departure out of this life.

The time will not allow to be so large in the Application of this subject as the near concernment we have in it seems to demand. However something I must say.

1. By the things we have now heard we are directed in what manner **we** ought to stand affected to the present life; that, on the one hand, we should not *loath* or *despise* it; nor, on the other hand, be *foolishly fond* of it, and averse to resign it, but prepared

to

to make a ready sacrifice of it at his command who gave it. Several things may concur to *excuse*, but nothing will *justify* our saying as *Job* does---*I loath it*---life on such terms is my abhorrence. Should we speak thus when we are most grievously afflicted, we should offend against the sovereignty and wisdom of that God who orders every thing that befalls us in life; and not only against his wisdom and sovereign dominion, but his goodness too, which doth not send any affliction, whether lighter or heavier, undeserved, or without an eye to our final felicity. We should likewise hereby lay open a heart working with secret discontent, or at best, not so intirely subdued to the divine will and disposal as it ought to be. Neither must we *despise* life, because our days are vanity, empty of real good, any more than we are allowed to *loath* it, when it is fullest of evils. We might be under strong temptations to do this, if Death terminated our prospect, and there was nothing beyond but night and emptiness. But when we consider, that this life is but the *infancy*, or at best, *childhood* of our beings, (to which it is compared by the great Apostle *St. Paul*^s) that it is the time allotted us for the trial of our faith and obedience, in which we are to be trained up for maturity of bliss; this momentary, this otherwise trifling existence of
ours,

ours, becomes in this view, a thing of the greatest concern and importance to us imaginable, because it determines, once for all, what our following eternity shall be. And if, as this life affords us an opportunity of obtaining an everlasting reward, we have so improved the grace received as not to neglect this invaluable opportunity, we cannot be too thankful for this life to the great Author of it, by whom it is designed for the introduction to a happier, and never-ending existence.

Shall I add this further admonition, that we ought not to be too impatient in our desires to go hence, even when this impatience is not bred by any thing displeasing to us in the present life, but purely by the high esteem we have of the promised recompence, and our being so wholly swallowed up in the contemplations of it, and the exercises of devotion preparatory to it, that we have a kind of indignation against life for being so long, and spend our time too much as if we were not among the inhabitants of this world, and had no business in it? Alas, such a caution as this is seldom needed. Happy souls that are under this temptation! How few such are to be found! However, if such there be, they are to be minded, that this is really a fault to which they are tempted, though the temptation be of such a kind that it can befall none but persons of the
most

most eminent piety and goodness; and that the desire of the reward hath something irregular and excessive in it, as often as they repine to stay out the appointed time of labour and service. That which leads them into this error is a very good reason why, on the other hand, none of the truly religious should be averse to quit this life, at the proper season, when they are to receive one of infinitely greater value in the room of it. A simple and unthinking partiality indeed, for a wilderness, in which they have wandered so long, seeking rest and finding none, to turn back their eye and heart towards it, just as they are upon the borders of *Canaan*, and about to take possession of the promised land. Of the two, an impatience of life, occasioned by a weight of zeal, not imaginary troubles, and a well grounded hope of deliverance from them, is more pardonable than such a blind and excessive love to it. But better than both these, is an intire willingness to wait God's time for our return from this state of banishment; out of a settled persuasion that his time must be best, and the pleasure we have in serving God while he hath any work for us to do; and when that time is come, to depart, let what will hang upon us, and draw us back.

2. We are further instructed in the method we must pursue, if we intend to be thus rightly affected towards this present

mortal life. We must put out souls under the conduct and influence of divine Grace. We must not be satisfied till we feel this heavenly principle beat strong in our bosoms; and we must be sure to cherish it, and tend it, even with more care than our *first parents* in innocence did the noblest plants of paradise; avoiding whatever would choak it, as all immoderate cares, compared in scripture to thorns, will do; or starve its growth, which is the effect of the pleasures of life, not enjoyed with temperance and moderation; or finally blast it with its poisonous influence, which is what we have reason to fear from every sinful action, and much more, from every evil custom and habit. And on the other hand, we must heedfully observe, and diligently practise all those wise rules by which the life and power of religion are promoted in the soul; such as growing in the knowledge of God and divine things, and frequent meditation on them; by means of which latter, from the light which is in the understanding, a sacred warmth is derived into the will and affections; a life abounding in good works; being much in secret prayer, and attending upon the ordinances of divine worship in publick; particularly, laying hold of every opportunity of meeting our Lord at his Table, and putting, and keeping our hearts in the best preparation we can for it. Were these things constantly practised
by

by us, Grace would be more and more victorious, and make us to triumph with it, trampling on all the power of the enemy, despising what is usually called the *glory of the world*, and *rejoicing in hope of the glory of God*.

Among all the graces of the Spirit, I would recommend holy love, the love of God and of Jesus, as peculiarly useful to preserve us at an equal distance from each extreme; for, was this love the reigning passion of my soul, and its power still increasing, how should I prize life as an opportunity of promoting the interest of those I love best? And with what joy resign it, to go and meet my God and Saviour? Like the blessed Apostle, who had a desire to depart, because Death, by bringing him where Christ was, would be his gain; yet was not set against living longer in a state of absence from Christ, because he loved him too well to decline any further labours and sufferings, by which he might contribute to the furtherance of his kingdom, and of the Faith and joy of his people; which seems to be the principal thing meant by him when he saith, ^h *To me to live is Christ*.

With a temper and posture of soul like this, did that excellent Servant of God, whose Remains we lately saw committed to the dust, meet her *last enemy*; if Death

^h Phil. i. 21—25.

could be called her *enemy*; which, we have ground to believe, proved her entrance to glory and immortality; at a time of life, when the infirmities of age are very sensibly felt by many, but were not so by her, who seemed to have a stock of life remaining sufficient to hold out many years longer. God was pleased to visit her with a very fore calamity*, that as she had been useful in the former part of her days, as a pattern of the more active virtues of the christian life, she might not want an opportunity of adorning the gospel of her Lord and Saviour, of magnifying the strength of divine Grace, and the excellency of divine Consolations; and in a word, of edifying all about her, by practising those more difficult lessons of *patience* and *resignation*, under the severest pressures, which our holy religion teaches us. And be it spoken to the praise of God's Grace, this Servant of his did not *faint in the day of adversity*. Her submission to the will of her heavenly Father was tried for a long time together, and being *much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be purified with fire, was now found unto honour and glory*; and will be so, much more, *at the appearing of Jesus Christ*. And when at length her case appeared hopeless of any remedy but the last, and she had now done with the world, though she had *a desire to depart and be*
with

* A cancer in her tongue.

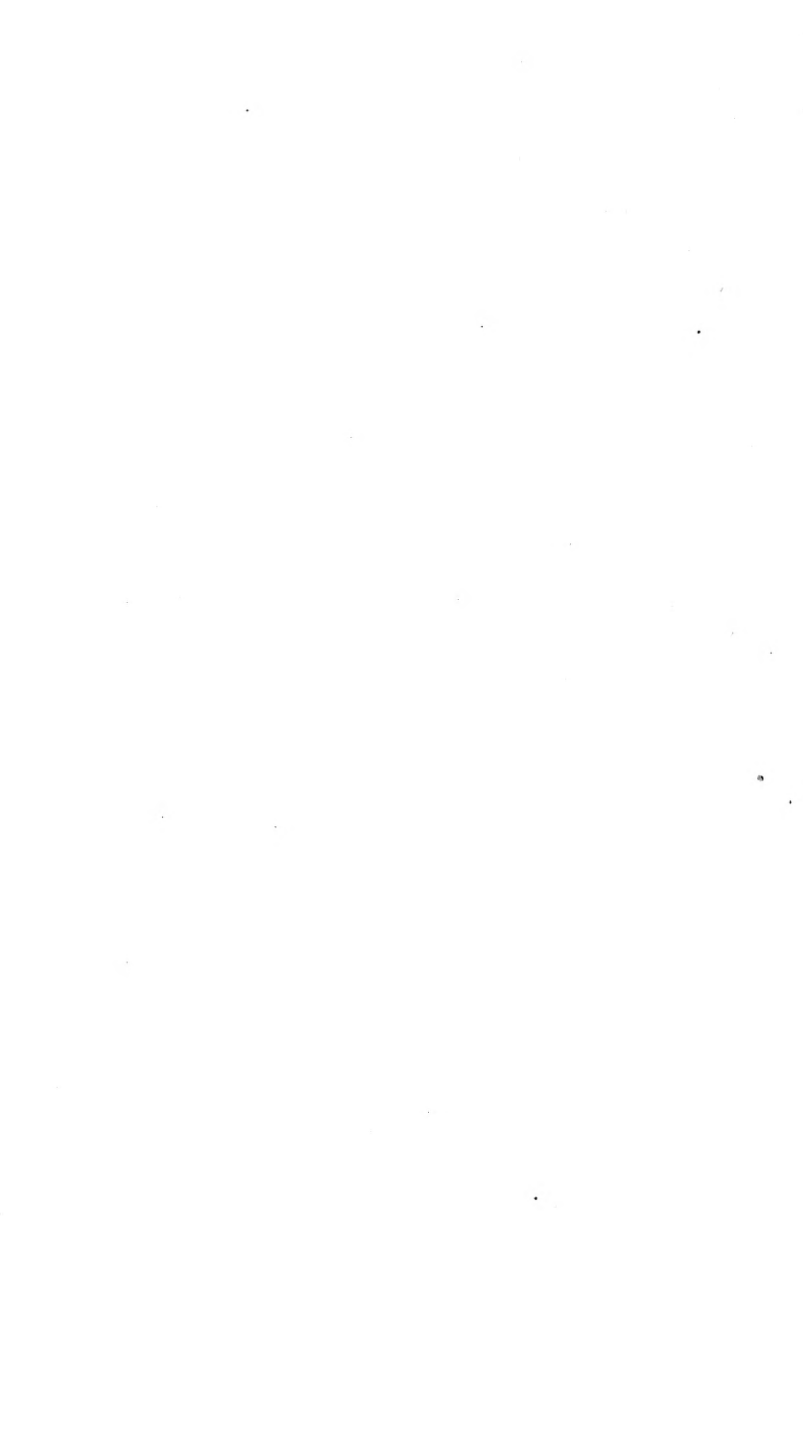
with *Christ*, which she esteemed *far better* than the happiest part of her life had been, and much more then, than the remainder of it with which she was now struggling, yet she did not cast away her patience, of which she received a present recompence, in the undisturbed calm and tranquility of her soul. To this freedom from distressing doubts and fears on her dying bed, besides her patience, which hath been now mentioned, the just notions she had of the goodness and mercy of God, and the Grace of the Gospel, together with her regular and holy conversation from her youth up, did greatly contribute. She knew how to manage the duties of the *christian* and of *common* life so, that one should not interfere with the other; was a constant attendant in the *house of God* as long as she could be so; and not less mindful of her obligation to own him in the *family*, and to serve him in the *closet*; to which we may presume, she was not more determined by duty than by inclination. The advantage of such a life as this she found, to her great joy, at the approach of Death, when, from a consciousness of her own integrity, and a humble reliance on the merits of her Saviour, (which two, I believe I may say, *always* go together) she had that peace which the world, enjoyed in the greatest perfection, cannot give, nor, when she was forever leaving it, was able to take away.

I will venture to mention one thing more; that as she had chosen the way of *non-conformity*, and continued in it to the last, so, to a friend who visited her on her sick-bed, she declared her intire satisfaction in what she had done; which I do not observe, as laying any great stress on those things that are the foundation of *names* and *parties* among christians; all which I should be heartily glad to see abolished; but that I may have occasion to recommend that *christian temper*, which ought to be preserved by all who agree in the weightier matters of religion, and express by one towards another; of which we may take the *deceased* for an example, who did not, as too many do, want charity for those in different sentiments from herself; she was of more generous notions, and of a more *catbolick*, that is, a more *evangelical* spirit, than this comes to; and while she followed the persuasions of her own mind, could easily admit that others might be sincere in their profession who did not think just as she did, and had a cordial respect for all who appeared to walk according to our *common Rule*, and to love our *common Lord*. The holy Life, the peaceful Death, and honourable Memory of this Saint of God must yield great comfort to her *Descendants* and *Relatives*; and, they must give me leave to be their monitor, are an answerable obligation upon them to tread in her steps

steps, and to be *followers of her as far as she was so of Christ.* To conclude.

Let us all so improve the *Word* and *Providence of God*, and the pious *Examples* of our friends, *departed in the Lord*, that we, henceforward, may pass a truer judgment on life than we have hitherto done, and be able to say (not out of *impatience* and *discontent*; not through indulgence to *nature only*, wearied out with affliction and trouble; nor, barely, on a *rational view* of things; but) as the voice of the *Grace* and *Spirit* of God within us, *I would not live here always*; nor, indeed, any longer than till *I have finished the work which God hath given me to do.*







*The great Usefulness of good Exam-
ples duly attended to; and En-
couragement to follow them.*

A

Funeral Sermon

Occasioned by the

D E A T H

Of the Reverend

Mr. Robert Darch,

I N T H E

LXV. Year of his Age.

1737.





T O

Mrs. D A R C H.

MADAM,

*I*T is a considerable diminution in the value of all human friendships, that we are so often called to mourn with our Friends, under the various pressures and afflictions of this mortal life, and at last to sorrow for them at their departure out of it. Death, which is never far off, dissolves the nearest earthly ties. And what does this teach us but to place our trust more in the unchangeable everlasting God, who will never forsake us; and to look for our happiness in that world, where the Society is eternal, and their Blessedness the same; being made up of delights as durable as they are exalted and satisfying? Nothing tends more to give us an affecting view of our own mortality, than the Deaths of those who were once our other selves; or to endear, and, as it were, consecrate the memory of their Virtues, than the thought that we shall see and converse with them no more in this world. Is that Person gone from me, whose Presence and
 Conversation

Conversation heightened all the satisfactions of life, and softened all its cares and griefs? I consider the grave is, in a manner, ready for me too; there my Body must shortly be laid; no matter how soon, if my Soul be prepared for its flight to happier mansions, and I have dispatched all my business here below. As oft as those things come into my mind, which I so justly esteemed in my late Companion, I have pleasure mingled with pain; pleasure to think of the happiness which the owner of such amiable qualities, and pious dispositions, is gone to possess; pain from the reflection on my own loss. Henceforth I will love that virtue and goodness more, for the sake of which, I formerly loved the Person that was the Subject of them. I will call to mind the examples of my dear Friends and Relatives departed in the Lord, and those bequeathed the world by the long succession of witnesses to the power of religion in the several ages of it; to the end, that, forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to the things that are before, I may press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

May this Discourse which was first preached, and is now published, at your request, help to entertain a solitary hour, and be of some use to excite the Relations and Acquaintance of the Deceased, or any others, to behave as followers of the same Jesus, and expectants of the same Heaven, and I have my aim.

Madam,

DEDICATION. 317

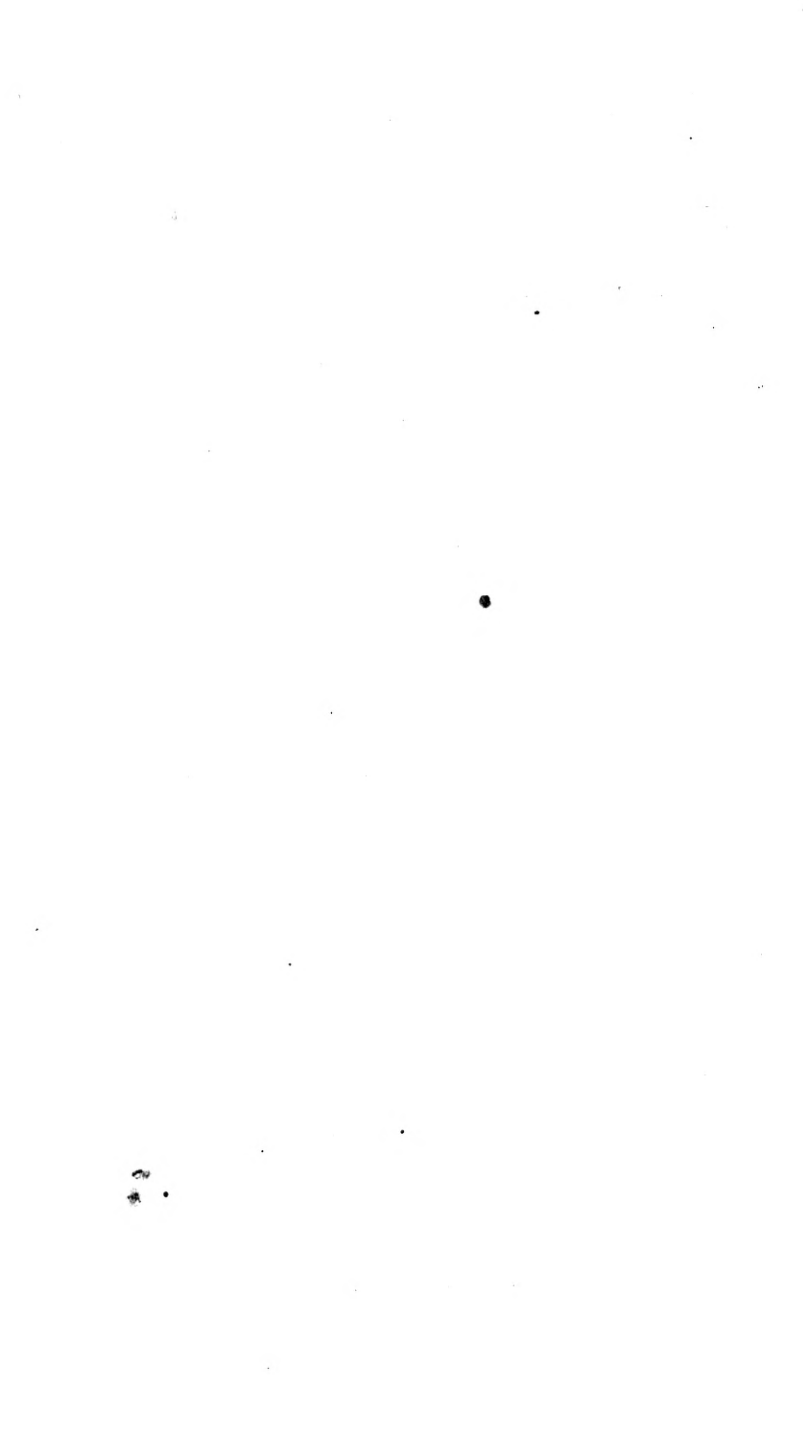
Madam, *My heart's desire and prayer to God is, That you may enjoy those assistances and consolations which Religion only can bestow ; have the satisfaction to see the surviving Branches of your Family eminently blest of God, and blessings to the World ; and when your pilgrimage here on earth is at an end, enter into that Rest which remaineth for the People of God. I am,*

MADAM,

Your most Obliged,

Humble Servant,

HENRY GROVE.





S E R M O N IX.

The great Usefulness of good
Examples.

H E B. XIII. 7, 8.

Remember them that have had the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and forever.

AMONG that great variety of motives and arguments, by which the Penmen of holy scripture, according to the wisdom given unto them, endeavour to excite their readers to constancy in the profession and practice of the true religion, that taken
from

from examples of eminent virtue and piety is not the least considerable. The Author of this *Epistle* thought it needful, in several places, to propose it to the believing *Hebrews*, in order to prevent their falling off from Christianity, or growing cold and indifferent in their affection to it, upon the account of those sufferings and reproaches to which it exposed them. The *Truth* being in itself well worth owning, and having been always zealously owned and espoused by the best part of mankind, he exhorts them not to be *slothful* (unactive, cowardly, weak) *but followers of them who through Faith and Patience inherited the Promises*^a. In the Eleventh Chapter he presents them with a long and glorious roll of Worthies, remarkable for that *Faith* which is *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*^b; to the intent that, *being compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, they might lay aside every weight, and the sin that did most easily beset them, and run with patience the race set before them*. These instances were more peculiarly adapted to answer the writer's aim, in this respect, that the persons enumerated, being such whose names were honourably recorded in their own scriptures, and many of them heads and founders of their race, it was to be supposed they would pay more regard to their memory and virtues, than to those of others,

^a Heb. vi. 12.^b Chap. xi. 1. xii. 1.

others, with whose actions they had little or no acquaintance.

He then proceeds to put them in mind of some *Examples* that concerned them more directly as *Christians*; chiefly that of *Jesus*, *the author and finisher of their Faith*; who, for the joy set before him, willingly endured the cross, despising the shame; and is now set down on the right-hand of the throne of God. In the words of the text he commends to their remembrance some that had formerly been their spiritual *Guides*, and had spoken unto them *the word of God*; whose *Faith* he exhorts them to follow, considering the end of their conversation; and that *Jesus Christ* is the same yesterday, and to day, and forever.

There are these *three Observations* that naturally arise out of the words.

The *First* is on the nature of the *Pastoral Office*; together with the genuine character or description of those that behave well in it, and thereby deserve to be held in reputation while they live, and remembered with honour after their deaths.

The *Second* is concerning the singular advantage of recollecting the shining virtues of worthy persons, as patterns of our imitation; those especially that have been of our nearer acquaintance, and to

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whom

whom we have borne a more immediate and particular relation.

The *Third* and *Last* Observation, with which I shall close and enforce the application of the former, is on the abundant encouragement which christians, in all ages, have, to shew the same dilligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; inasmuch as *Jesus Christ*, their common Lord, is the *same yesterday, and to day, and forever.*

I. Let us observe, and briefly consider, the nature of the *Pastoral or Ministerial Office*; together with the genuine character or description of those who behave well in it, and thereby deserve to be held in reputation while they live, and remembered with honour after their deaths.

1. The nature and design of the *Office* may be gathered from the *Title* given to the persons intrusted with it, and the *Business* they are employed in. Their *Title* is that of *Guides*; their *Business* to *speak*, or *preach the Word of God*. They are *Guides* to others in the worship of God, and in the way to immortality. God leadeth his people, like a flock, by their hand, through the wilderness of this world, to the heavenly *Canaan*. They are *Pastors* and *Guides*; not *Rulers*, in the modern

modern notion of that word, whether singly or conjointly.

Our translation indeed sounds to this sense; *Remember them that have* (or rather, that *have had*, the persons intended being departed out of this life) *the RULE over you*; but the truer rendering is that in the margin *Guides. Remember your Guides*; for, as the original word, *ηγουμενοι*, does not necessarily carry in it the idea of *authority*, so there is no ground for affixing that sense to it here; nor does it appear that our blessed Saviour ever intended to delegate any part of his authority to his Ministers, but rather the contrary; both from the nature of the christian profession, which is to be intirely free, and from those words of our Lord to the *Twelve*, when they discovered an inclination to strive about power and pre-eminence; *Ye know that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.*

It must be owned, in the 17th verse of this Chapter, where the same word occurs again, it is said, *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves*; but the meaning is no more than this, that they were to *obey the Truth*, as the expression is elsewhere;

Y 2 or

or the ^e *Word of God*, faithfully delivered by them; not to obey them, in things which had no foundation in that *Word*. They were to submit to the exhortations and counsels given them, relating to a holy and heavenly conversation. What immediately follows, evidently determines this to be the sense of the words *obedience* and *submission*, in this place; *for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief*; being able to glorify God for your receiving the word with readiness of mind, and not barely a professed, but real and intire subjection to it.

And whereas it may be further pleaded in favour of *ecclesiastical authority*, that we read of ^f *Governments* as an office in the christian church, and of some that ^g *ruled*; besides its being doubtful what the exact meaning of these words is, and, probable, that no such thing is intended by them as proper, personal *authority*, it is enough to observe, that whatever power was lodged in certain persons *at that time*, for the better managing and ordering the affairs of the church of Christ, then planting in the world, there were extraordinary gifts attended it, which at once justified the *claim* to it, and abundantly qualified for the regular and beneficial *exercise* of it. These extraordinary gifts ceasing, the power that

^e Gal. iii. 1. and Prov. v. 13. xv. 32.

^f 1 Cor. xii. 28. ^g Rom. xii. 8. 1 Tim. v. 7.

that was supported and conducted by them, ceased of course with them. Power, even in *civil States and Societies*, is a dangerous thing, a sort of *edge-tool*, which few know how to use as they should, and by that means frequently becomes an instrument of mischief; but, the present circumstances of mankind requiring it, and the advantages, upon the whole, outweighing the inconveniences, it is therefore vested in persons appointed thereto by the community. But now in the *church*, which is constituted for quite different ends and purposes, as there is no need of any other *authority*, properly so called, besides that of Christ himself, speaking to us in the scriptures, so the consequences of the abuse of such *authority*, where it is unjustly usurped, are so exceedingly pernicious to religion and the souls of men, that we have great reason to acknowledge the wisdom and goodness of our Saviour, the one lawgiver of the church, in not trusting this power to any of his followers, by which they might be tempted, and enabled to tyrannize over their fellow-subjects.

The result is, that the Ministers of the gospel are simply *Pastors, Guides, and Teachers*, in the christian church; that they have no dominion over the faith, or consciences, or persons of men, but are only ^h *helpers of their joy*; obliged *to feed the flock of God, and to*

Y 3

take^h 2 Cor i. 24. 1 Pet. v. 2, 3.

take the over-sight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre's sake, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but examples to the flock. They are not to teach for doctrines the commandments of men, or their own private fancies, and groundless opinions; but are to speak the Word of God, the pure unmixed doctrine of the gospel, as far as they are able to find it out by the most dilligent and impartial search of the scriptures; not ¹walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God; instructing the ignorant; having compassion upon, and reclaiming those that are out of the way; satisfying the doubting, and comforting the feeble-minded.

The scriptures are the common rule of faith and practice, both to Ministers and People; and though it be the Minister's part to interpret and apply the scripture in the best manner he is able; yet, after all, he is to leave the People to judge and determine for themselves. Nor have the Ministers of the gospel any just reason to regret their having no greater power than this in religious matters, as those among them, that are wise and humble, will not regret it; but think it their happiness that they are freed from the temptation. Let them only take care to discharge their

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 2.

their office well, so as to merit the character given of those in the *text*, and it will gain them a secret empire over the minds and affections of people, by the force of truth, *the armour of righteousness on the right hand, and on the left*; and the constraining efficacy of a strict and heavenly conversation; a much nobler sort of power than that of dictating right and wrong, modes and ceremonies of worship, and articles of belief. Let their *faith*, and *holiness*, and *constancy* be fit to be recommended to imitation; and in that case they will not be likely to want their share of respect among men, and may be sure they shall not fail of the approbation and acceptance of God, which is of infinitely greater importance to them; this, I say, is to be their aim in the discharge of their holy function, this being

2. The genuine character or description of those who behave rightly in it, and thereby deserve to be held in reputation while they live, and remembered with honour after their deaths. In these things was the commendation founded of those spiritual *Guides* whom the *text* celebrates. They *spoke the Word of God*, not the words of men; not only as to the general *foundation*, but the *superstructure* they built upon it, keeping close to their instructions, or the plan marked out to them by *revelation*; and ^k *did not skun to declare*

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the

^k Acts xx. 27.

the whole council of God, out of fear that some part of it might not be so acceptable. By their *faith* is either meant their belief of the sufficiency of the gospel revelation, without any help from the *law of Moses*, which the judaizing christians were exceeding fond of joining with it; * or their steadfast hope and trust in God for all needful supplies of grace and consolation in the way, and for eternal life and glory at the end; or, finally, their extraordinary fidelity in the discharge of their ministerial function; in the last of which, as well as in the other two, they were *proper Examples*, not only to other Ministers, though to them chiefly, but to the whole body of christian believers; just as in a great house, notwithstanding the diversity of trusts and employments, the duty of every servant being, in general, the same, *viz.* to be zealously attached to the interest of his master, and to serve him with all faithfulness and dilligence; whatever servant acquires an uncommon character in these respects, he may very well be proposed as a pattern to all his fellow-servants, be the nature of their posts never so different: and, when it is added, *considering the end of their conversation*, it is further implied, that their conversation had been truly christian and upright; adorned with integrity of manners, meekness, gentleness,

* This sense seems to be confirmed by the following verses.

ness, charity, and every other virtue becoming the Gospel, and persons intrusted with the dispensation of it; and that with the most unshaken constancy and resolution of mind, they persevered in this course to the end of their lives, neither seduced by the inticements of pleasure, nor disheartened by any sufferings and inconveniences which they were either threatened with, or actually sustained *for righteousness sake*. To this sense is the word *ελεως*, which we translate the *End of their conversation* to be explained; it denotes their manner of concluding life, and departing out of it; they ^l*endured to the end*, were ^m*stedfast and immoveable*; did not only *run well* for some time, but ⁿ*finish their course with joy*, and bear their *dying* as well as *living* testimony to the religion they had taught. This was their character, and is so, in a greater or lesser degree, of all the faithful Ministers of Christ.

II. The next Observation is concerning the singular advantage of recollecting the shining virtues of worthy persons, as patterns of our imitation; those especially of our nearer acquaintance, and to whom we have borne a more immediate and particular relation.

Man

Man is so formed by nature, that Examples have a very great influence upon him, whether good or bad. And though the bad usually do more to corrupt, than good examples to purge and reform the world, yet these too have their effect, and that very considerable upon the well disposed; nor are bad Examples altogether without their use to such; which is probably one reason that it hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost to transmit instances of both sorts to all generations in the sacred Scriptures, Examples of wickedness and impiety, as rocks which we should heedfully shun; Examples of sanctity and religion, as lights to direct us, and well drawn copies to write after, some few things excepted, which are likewise marked out to us.

There are *four* kinds of patterns set before us in holy Scripture, *viz.* the great and ever-blessed God, the fountain and centre of all perfection, by their conformity to whom, the goodness and excellence of all other intelligent Beings are to be estimated, and whom therefore it concerns us *to follow* or imitate *° as dear children*, being *ᵖ perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.* *ᵑ* Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the *Apostle, and High-Priest of our Profession*, from whom we are to learn what we ought to be, how we ought to act, and in what manner we should

° Eph. v. 1.

ᵖ Matt. v. 48.

ᵑ Heb. iii. 1.

should be prepared to *suffer*; ^r *walking as he walked*; ^t *having the same mind in us that was in him*; ^v *and considering him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be weary and faint in our minds.* The holy Angels, whom we acknowledge it our duty to emulate, when we pray that ^u *the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven.* And, finally, of Men of like passions, and natural frailties with ourselves; but, however, distinguished from the multitude by the fair and bright Example which they set and left the world in their several places and generations, in which their light shon before men. Each of these models hath its peculiar circumstances to render the serious contemplation of it useful to us; but it is the last of them only that my present Subject calls me to treat of. And here

1. Let us consider some of the advantages that we may reap from good Examples in general.

They have a manifest tendency to establish us in the belief of the true Religion; which appears with a more convincing evidence when we behold a lovely counter-part of its divine Doctrines, and admirable Precepts in the lives and actions of those that profess it. By this means the *Truth* is, as it were, cloathed with a body and hath life, and

^r 1 John ii. 6.
^t Heb. xii. 3.

^v Phil. ii. 5.
^u Matt. vi. 10.

and breath; and motion. Christianity hath been represented by some, as a weak and useless institution, which leaves mankind as bad as it found them; but very unjustly, since the world was not only enlightened, but very much reformed by it in many respects, as might very well be expected from that great increase of light and knowledge which broke in upon it from this single source; and the Examples of an exalted piety, a diffusive benevolence, an heroic patience and fortitude, a generous forgiveness of the greatest injuries, and a heavenly temper of mind, have been vastly more numerous from the time that the gospel came to be known to men. If we step back to the first rise of our Religion, we find ourselves encompassed with *a great Cloud of Witnesses*. A very early Writer of the Christian Church, * speaking of the Apostles, especially *Peter* and *Paul*, hath this remarkable Passage. “ To these, men who led a divine
 “ life, there was an accession of a vast mul-
 “ titude of elect (or excellent) persons, who,
 “ having suffered many reproaches and tor-
 “ ments, became a most beautiful Example
 “ among us.” Nor, blessed be God, are our own times, at this distance from the birth of Christianity, so barren of laudable Examples, as not to be able to furnish many, in whom we have a visible demonstration of the
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* Clemens Rom. *ad Cor.* Ep. 1.

the beauty and energy of those principles from which their virtues may be shewn naturally to flow. The Cause is known by its Effects, the Fountain by the Streams.

Such Examples are also corrective; they strongly work upon the principle of an ingenuous shame, where there are any tolerable remains of it, and thereby contribute to make the bad man good, and the good man better. As a deformed Object is never so discernable, so disgusting, so like itself, as when it is set near one that is beautiful, so Vice does then appear in the most odious shape and colours, when it is brought into a comparison with Virtue. The sinners conscience reproaches him with the wise choice and the regular rational conduct of the good man, as well as with his own faults and follies. And even the good man himself, when he sees another that excels him, either in the general character of goodness, or in some particular quality and attainment, is humbled under a sense of those imperfections, which would otherwise, perhaps, have given him little or no uneasiness. “ O my
 “ Soul, think of the heights that others have
 “ reached, their exactness, their zeal, their
 “ courage, their unwearied activity; think of
 “ this, and blush that thou shouldst come so
 “ far behind them! What credit are they,
 “ or were they to Religion! What instances
 “ of its divine and supernatural power! Ah,
 “ what

“ what a difference do I find in myself from
“ them ! How little is Religion indebted to
“ me ! How little is the Gospel adorned by
“ me ! Were there no better proofs of the Di-
“ vinity of the christian *Faith* than those
“ which my temper and life will supply, ah,
“ how soon would its reputation sink, and the
“ ground it had won in the world be again
“ lost !” The Example of *Christ*, though in-
comparably more perfect than any other, yet
seems, in this respect, less fitted to shame us ;
that it does not appear so wonderful in him,
who was a *man* indeed, but not a *fallen*
or a *mere man*. When we compare our
lives with his, we are not so apt to be over-
whelmed with confusion at sight of the
great disparity betwixt them, because we do
not pretend to be *the Sons of God* in the sense
he was, or to be endowed with the *Spirit* in
the same boundless measure. Let us there-
fore behold mortal, sinful men, born, in
all respects, like ourselves, and upon our own
level, yet by Faith triumphing over all the
temptations of the world, the flesh and the
devil.

Again, there is a strange attraction in a good
Example ; the light of it is truly sweet, and
its beauty alluring, and to a mind rightly
prepared irresistible. It seizes our esteem,
steals upon our affections, and so insinuates
itself into the soul, as, by insensible degrees,
to transform it into the same likeness. The
Magnet

Magnet hath not only an attractive virtue itself, but communicates it to the Iron that touches it. So, under the influence of divine Grace, holy Examples seriously laid to heart, convey their own qualities into us, better our spirits, and make us become other men. To add no more on this head.

There is an animating power in the Examples of those that have acquitted themselves well in the combat, and vanquished all the discouragements and temptations they have met with. This infuses life and spirit into others, and gives them resolution and courage to grapple with any difficulties, and to surmount all opposition in the way of their duty. The Apostle *James* would have the christian converts, to whom he writes, *“ Take the prophets, that had spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.* The single Example of *St. Paul*, in a time of persecution, was of admirable use; for he tells us, that *“ his bonds in Christ were manifest in the Palace, and in all other Places; and that many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by his bonds, were much more bold to speak the truth without fear.*

“ Why should I faint or flinch, when so
 “ many others have not done it? What,
 “ though the confederacy in sin be strong;
 “ yet all have not taken that side; I have
 “ more

“ James v. 10.

* Phil. i. 13.

“ more than enough to keep me in heart
 “ and in countenance. I am not alone in
 “ fighting the good fight of Faith; I am
 “ not alone in running the christian race;
 “ I am not the only person that hath en-
 “ countered with censure and hard treat-
 “ ment for adhering to the truth; I see the
 “ footsteps of others before me, who are
 “ at the same time well spoken of in this
 “ world, and rewarded in the world above.
 “ I am determin'd, by the Grace of God,
 “ to tread the same path, and to despise,
 “ like them, the allurements and terrors of
 “ the world, all that man can do for me,
 “ or against me. None of these things
 “ moved those brave souls, ^y neither count-
 “ ed they life itself dear, when they were
 “ called to lay it down; and why then
 “ should I? Under all the infirmities and
 “ pressures of the present state, I will la-
 “ bour to bear up as they did; and, though
 “ in this ^z *Tabernacle* I groan sometimes,
 “ *being burthened*, at worst, I will not rec-
 “ kon my burthens insupportable; but, re-
 “ flecting with what calmness and tranqui-
 “ lity some have pass'd their days, will set
 “ myself to enjoy the pleasures of religion,
 “ and to be as happy in the meditations of
 “ God, and of Jesus, and the exercises of
 “ Faith and Hope, of Virtue and Devotion,
 “ as I possibly can. I will try, at least,
 “ whether

^y Acts xx. 24.

^z 2 Cor. v. 4.

“ whether I cannot have the same peace,
 “ living and dying, which others have had,
 “ and which I know not why I should ut-
 “ terly despair of attaining.”——So that
 good Examples, in general, are exceeding
 useful.

2. There are particular advantages attend-
 ing the consideration of such praise-worthy
 Examples as have fallen within the com-
 pass of our own knowledge.

These add a new force to the Examples
 of antient times. Some are ready to call in
 question the miracles wrought in the first a-
 ges of the Gospel, for no other reason but
 that God does not see fit they should be
 common, and vouchsafed to every genera-
 tion. They never saw the blind restored
 to sight, by the speaking of a word; the lame
 healed, the dead raised to life, and are there-
 fore so unreasonable, as, in defiance of the
 most credible history, joined with a doctrine
 worthy of such miraculous attestation, to
 doubt whether these things were so. And
 it would be the same as to those instances
 of a uniform piety, and an unconquered
 faith and patience, that are conveyed down
 in the sacred writings, if there were not
 others like them common to every age.
 In every age there have been those who, if
 they have not suffered for religion, have yet,
 under the heaviest sufferings and afflictions
 of life, been supported by it; and, by the

steady practice of universal goodness, greatly praised it. These modern Examples lead back our thoughts to those of earlier times, especially those which the Scripture hath made immortal, are an additional confirmation of them, and serve not only to revive the impression of them upon the mind and heart, but to render it deeper.

These Examples too, being nearer, have commonly a greater, and more forcible influence than others. Not but that we are apt to admire things the more, the further off they are removed from us. In this case distance magnifies the object; but then, though admiration be oftenest raised by things remote, there are other passions which operate more strongly according to the nearness of the object. Thus men are more liable to envy a contemporary, and one of the same place or country than those of other nations, and of times long past; and as envy, the passion of bad men, and which should be less, so emulation, or an ambition of imitating what hath been well done by others, is most powerfully stirred up, in virtuous and generous minds, by Examples nigher home. When we consider those holy persons that left the world long ago, we do not think their Examples so obliging upon us as those of our own times and acquaintance; neither do they generally produce

duce in us such a secret shame and uneasiness for the little resemblance there is between them and us. Here others, as well as ourselves, will be apt to make comparisons not at all to our credit.

In a word, these Examples are a sensible proof that God hath not withdrawn his Holy Spirit from the Church; but as there is, and always will be, a Visible Church upon earth, a society of men making an outward profession of Christianity, so Christ hath, and we have reason to think, always will have, his real disciples and followers, those that believe and trust in him as their Saviour, obey him as their Lord, imitate him as their pattern, and openly confess him before men. If such Examples are comparatively rare, it lies upon the professors of Christianity to make them more common; and so they might easily do, were they as intent upon their improvement in the graces and virtues of the divine life, as men often are on making a figure in the several professions of this life to which they apply themselves.

3. If there are any persons of great piety and goodness, to whom we have borne a more immediate and particular relation, the Examples of such are, or ought to be, more than ordinarily beneficial to us. Whether we have been members of *Families* that have been under their care, in the quality of *Children*, or *Servants*, or otherwise; or of *Re-*

ligious Societies, in which they have presided as *Pastors*. It is to be presumed, that by our greater affection and regard to such, we shall be better prepared to receive the influence of their pious Examples. We have been more constant witnesses to their christian behaviour, ^a*have more fully known their Doctrine, Manner of Life, Purpose, Faith, Long-suffering, Charity, Patience*, as the Apostle *Paul* tells his Son *Timothy* concerning himself. We have had the benefit of their Instructions, Reproofs, Admonitions, Prayers, and Counsels; and received peculiar testimonies of affection and kindness from them; so that we shall be the more inexcusable, if having lived under the Instructions of such persons, enforced by a suitable Example, and by expressions of the most affectionate regard to our welfare, we are not at all like them. We must be bad indeed, to be never the better for being so placed and circumstanced. It was a great aggravation of *Eli's* Sons, that they had so good a man to their Father, and yet departed from the way in which they had not only been trained up by him, but had seen him walking before them.

4. Although living Examples have this advantage, that they are continually in our view, and not to be overlooked and forgotten by us, if we should endeavour it, yet upon
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^a 2 Tim. iii. 10.

some other accounts, the Examples of our pious Friends and Acquaintance that are removed out of the world by Death, are more likely to be regarded and followed. The Observation of the *Latin Poet* † is too often verified, “that men hate the virtue they esteem when it is before their eyes;” but then, as he adds, “those very persons shall praise and lament it when taken from them;” because that *Envy*, which would not suffer them to do justice to superior merit dies together with, or not long after the object of it. “*Envy* then turns into *Love* and *Veneration* ‡.” Death stamps a kind of sacred character upon deceased virtue, and draws a veil over any little blemishes that might formerly be mixed with it, and diminish the price of it; much as in a noble Statue, or fine piece of Painting, in which the justest rules of proportion are observed, all those roughnesses and inequalities that displeas’d the eye when it was view’d too near, vanish at once as soon as it is plac’d at a proper distance. Persons that have any taste and value for true goodness are willing to forget those imperfections of good men, dead and gone out of this world, which were

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very

† Virtutem incolumem odimus,

Sublatam ex oculis quærimus invidi. *Hor.*

‡ — Extinctus amabitur idem. *Hor.*

Præsentia invidia, præterita veneratione prosequimur.
Vell. Patenc.

very much over-ballanced by their commendable qualities, and useful actions.

5. As the good Examples of persons in every station of life, whether higher or lower, more publick or private, are very serviceable, so particularly those of pious and faithful *Ministers* recommended in the *Text*. The unaffected *Devotion*, the amiable and active *Goodness* of a Preacher of the Gospel, command attention and respect from his hearers, and, as it were, prepossess them in favour of every thing he says. They give *credibility* to his Doctrine, *weight* to his Counsels and Admonitions, *point* and *edge* to his Reproofs, and *efficacy* to his Exhortations. People will easily grant of such a one, that ^b *he believes, and therefore speaks*; that all his zeal is from an inward concern for the practice of holiness, and the welfare of their immortal souls, when they see him take so much care of his own, and press them to no other things than such as he himself is an Example of. And thus while a wicked Minister, or one that contradicts any part of his Doctrine in his conduct, destroys again those things which he had built; a Minister whose life is a comment on his Sermons, *edifies the Body of Christ* by his christian conversation, as well as by his ^c *aptness to teach*. — This finishes the enlargement on the second Observation which

^b 2 Cor. iv. 13.

^c 1 Tim. iii. 2.

which the *Text* affords us, *viz.* the singular advantage of recollecting the shining virtues of worthy persons, as patterns for our imitation; those especially of our nearer acquaintance, and to whom we have borne a more immediate and particular relation.

Let us then be so just to those who have left a good Example behind them, particularly those that have spoken to us the Word of God, and so kind to ourselves, as to recal their Virtues to mind, and make them the object of our studious imitation; *let us be followers of them*, as far as they were so of *Christ*, our general standard, and last appeal, and no further. It is foretold and promised, that ^d *the Righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.* God, for his own honour, watches over their good name, and by his Providence preserves their memory; and the world hath cause to perpetuate it for their own benefit, Examples of religion and virtue, of love to God and man, are like lights set up in the world for the direction of mankind in general, and for the comfort of God's People; some of which, like the lamps of heaven, extend their influence to all nations and times; such are *Scripture Examples*, among which the pattern of our Blessed Lord shines as the Sun in the front of Heaven. Others are of narrower influence, and sooner extinguished as to us;

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though

^d Pfal. cxii. 6.

though as they shall ^e shine (forever) as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father, their acquaintance, or descendants, should endeavour to make their virtues as long useful to themselves and others, as they can, that the ^f memory of the Just may be blessed.

We should be thankful to God for the instruction and consolation of those holy Examples that come to our knowledge, and oppose them to the sinful ones which the world is so full of, in order to preserve ourselves from the general contagion; chusing rather to follow a few that go right than the giddy wandering multitude. We should be ready to mend and improve ourselves by the glass which the lives of good men hold up to us, some of whom, perhaps, were remarkable for one virtue, others for another; some for more virtues, and in a more eminent degree; others for fewer, and those, it may be, not so conspicuous. However that be, we should make the best of every Example, carefully separating what merits our imitation from what does not; what does, we should labour to equal, and, if we can, to excel; what does not, we should take notice of, (not with pleasure, not to feed an envious temper, not to expose it to an ill-natured and an ill-judging world, not to justify and encourage ourselves in any thing unworthy the christian character, dross be-
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^f Matt. xiii. 43.

^f Prov. x. 7.

ing never the more valuable for being mixed with gold ; but) to be thereby excited to a more narrow scrutiny into our own conduct, and to frame and regulate it with more care. It is our own fault if we do not get something by the *Failings*, and much more by the *good Qualities*, and *good Actions* of others, whether *Ministers*, or *Parents*, or *Masters*, or any of our dear *Friends* or *Relatives* ; whether those that we have known ourselves, or those that we have heard and read of ; for the general reason is the same for all, *viz.* that what is true, just and lovely deserves imitation ; and being duly considered, would be of use to persuade and engage us to imitate it. And here, at the same time that it falls in my way to take notice what a profitable sort of *reading* the lives and characters of valuable and pious persons would be, if well chosen, and judiciously drawn up, I cannot forbear lamenting that they should too often be written in such a manner as to do hurt as well as good, if not more hurt than good ; which I doubt is sometimes the case. For, alas, such performances generally run in the spirit of a Party ; the things principally commended, and inculcated with the greatest ardour, are not those which make the difference between a religious character and the contrary ; or between one more perfect in the scale of the christian life, and another less so ; but such

such as the true disciples of Christ, are distinguished by one from another, the person whose character is embalmed from other christians, who, perhaps, excel him much in sober, rational piety, and the substantial useful virtues of the gospel. You are entertained with the peculiarities of this or that denomination of christians, the prejudices of education, the effects of natural temper and constitution; and it may be, such things as, in the judgment of every wise reader, very much deprectiate the character, and render it, upon the whole, dangerous to imitate. The consequence of this too often is, that people learn to place a great part of religion in things that have nothing of it but the name; to censure better men than themselves as in a lower form of christianity, if not wholly unacquainted with the truth and power of it; and to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, as singularly good, and in the number of the most spiritual and perfect. But this only by the by.

Let me now, in few words, call upon you to remember the Example of that worthy Minister of Jesus Christ, whose Death is the sad occasion of the present Discourse; recommending it to all, and, in a particular manner to those among whom he long spoke the Word of God, and administered the Ordinances of the gospel, to follow his faith, considering the end of his conversation, which

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was not barely inoffensive, but holy and useful. Many things there were in this good man, this faithful servant of Christ, highly deserving the observation of all. I shall beg leave to direct your eye to some of them. What *nature* began, *custom*, aided by *divine grace*, carried on to a greater degree of perfection. He had a felicity of temper, a calmness and moderation in his passions, beyond most; which he so improved by his constant self-government, that his mind seemed to be a region of perpetual serenity, unclouded and unruffled by intemperate affections. And this evenness and tranquility within, produced an answerable equality in his conduct, which was ever smooth and uniform. His religion sat easy upon him, and made him easy and acceptable to all about him, being the result of a sound and enlightened mind, not of mistaken notions, nor spoiled by disagreeable mixtures. He believed that men are free; free by the constitution of their nature to choose and to do good or evil; since without this liberty, nothing done by them would be one or the other; free by the genius and design of the gospel, from all imposition in matters belonging only to religion and conscience; and he was for their ⁵ *standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free*; not putting their understandings and consciences into the keeping of other men:
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⁵ Gal. v. 1.

he desired no such unreasonable sacrifice to be made to himself, far from imagining that because he was appointed a *Guide* in the Christian Church, any persons were therefore obliged to shut their eyes that he might lead them blind-fold. His charity or moderation in religious controversies among those who agree ^h *to love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*, was, like his prudence, *known unto all men* that knew him. He did not lay such a mighty stress as is too often done, on disputable opinions; could hope, and think, and speak well of others in differing sentiments; was always a friend to peaceable measures, and for none but scriptural terms of christian communion. His faith is the fiter to be followed, because it stood not in the wisdom and authority of men, but in the Word of God, which he believed to be a plain and perfect rule, without any human supplements, under whatever name and form obtruded upon the church of christ; the innocence of the name, and the modesty and humility of the pretence singifying very little, when the manifest aim is to impose a yoke of our own making upon the neck of the disciples. It may be further observed in commendation of his faith, that it was ⁱ *made perfect by works*; not substituted in the room of them, which is too often done.

Rightly

^h Eph. vi. 24.

ⁱ Jam. ii. 22.

Rightly judging the business of his own province to be sure enough, he invaded not that of other men; was not given to meddle where he had no call, and to pass sentence upon the conduct of those over whom God had not made him a judge; averse to censoriousness and evil-speaking; yet free to tell his friends, in a private and good natured manner, of any thing that he thought was not right, out of the unfeigned affection he bore them: ^k *Temperate in all things*; not lifted up with the abundance of this world's goods which God had blest him withal, so as to forget himself, and what he owed to the meanest persons. He placed his religion in being and doing good; and, in short, had, I am persuaded, for his ^l *rejoicing, the testimony of conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had his conversation in the world.*

For some years he was engaged in Academical business, for which he was not more qualified by his acquaintance with the part he undertook, than by the easy and clear manner he had of communicating his knowledge, and his uncommon skill in conducting and managing the education of Youth. But, an alteration in his private affairs obliging him to it, he quitted the office of a Tutor, to the great regret of his Collegues, who had so long
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^k 1 Cor. ix. 25.^l 2 Cor. i. 12.

the pleasure and satisfaction of his conversation, and the benefit of his advice. But however he still went on in the work of the ministry, with the reputation of a good Divine, and a useful Preacher, whose Discourses were fitted to do good, to inform the mind, and thereby to mend the heart; so that it must have been their own fault if his hearers were not the wiser and the better for him. It concerns them to call to remembrance the Word of God which he hath formerly spoken unto them; and, if upon reflection they find they did not pay that regard to it which they ought to have done, from henceforth to give themselves up to its guidance; forasmuch as though Ministers die, yet the Word of God, spoken by them, *liveth and abideth forever.*

Of his behaviour in domestick life, his family are the best witnesses, who, I pray God, may walk worthy of the good Instructions and Example he gave them, and have the loss of so valuable a relation, made up to them by the comforts of God's presence, and the abounding of his grace towards them.

It pleased God, towards the close of his life, to take him off from publick work by the ill state of his health; yet did he not, after this, cease to be useful many ways; particularly by preaching patience, and resignation

nation to the will of God to all about him, by his meek and chearful manner of bearing affliction. He continued to improve his own mind, when he was no longer capable of instructing others from the pulpit; and declared to a friend, "that reading was one of the "greatest pleasures of his life."

In the approaches of his end what a remarkable instance was he of that quietness and assurance which are *"the effect of righteousness,* and the most natural conclusion of a well-spent life! He had been for a long time *God's waiting servant,* as he himself expressed it; and when the time for his dismissal was come, expected it with all composure of mind. A friend of his, in the ministry, visiting him a day or two before his death, he prayed *the blessing of God might be on him and his labours;* and told him, *he believed his change was near.* The other saying *he hoped it would be a happy change for him;* he replied, *he hoped so too, and did not doubt of it, through the grace of God by Jesus Christ.* Such was the end of this good man, and of his conversation. That we may die his death, and our *° End may be peace* as his was, let us lead the same kind of life. Those things which we have *learned, and received, and heard, and seen in him,* or in any other faithful followers of Christ, agreeable to our common rule and
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^a Isai. xxxii. 17.

^o Psal. xxxvii. 37.

pattern, let us do, and the God of ^P *Peace shall be with us.*—I shall close and enforce all by the last Observation, to which I now proceed, *viz.*

III. The abundant encouragement that christians, in all ages, have to shew the same dilligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; in as much as *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and forever.* This is the motive made use of by the Writer of this Epistle, to set home his exhortation; and a very powerful one it is in itself, and cannot but have great weight with all those that seriously consider it. The time will not allow me to enlarge upon it, as it would well bear. *Christ was the same yesterday*; that is, to those who had already vanquished in the christian cause; is the *same to day*; that is, to them whom the Author of this Epistle would have to tread in the steps of their departed *Guides*, and to other christians then living; and will be the *same forever*; that is, to his sincere disciples in all following ages, to the end of the world. Why should we not rival the faith, and holiness, and zeal, and constancy of those that are gone before us, or that are advanced most above us, since we serve the same master; profess the same doctrine; are favoured with the same assistance; and have the promise, and expectation of the same reward? All these

these seem to be implied in the expression, *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and forever.*

1. We serve the same master, the same kind, the same glorious and divine master, who is as deserving of the zeal and fidelity of his servants as ever; hath the same interest and power in heaven, and the same care of his people upon earth. We have the same pretensions to his favour that any others have had, and may be as confident of obtaining it, if we take the right method for it; for he is no *respector of persons*, further than they have a respect to their duty, and the glory of God. He observes the utmost impartiality in proportioning his favour; as tenderly regards, and as readily accepts those of one age, as those of another; and all of the same age, who are followers of that which is good, as he does any; according as they love that, he loves them. There is not one among us whom he will not be as well pleased with as with his greatest favourites, provided only we have the same title to his favour and approbation, by the uprightness of our behaviour, and our fervour, and cheerfulness, and dilligence in serving him.

2. We profess the same doctrine. The religion of *Christ* is conveyed down to us uncorrupted in the writings of the *New Testa-*

ment; so *Christ* and his *Apostles* taught; and so they that were converted by them to the profession of the gospel believed. The doctrine that wrought such a surprizing change in the world is not lost; the first preachers and professors of it are long since dead and gone, but the truth survives them, and will forever survive them. We know the principles they acted upon, and have the guidance of the same heavenly light that conducted them. Indeed the doctrine of the Gospel was spoken before it was written; but this, surely, can make no difference, since the things delivered are the very same, and have an equal right to challenge our attention: in this we have the advantage of the first disciples, that while the Word spoken to them vanished in speaking, and they were afterwards obliged to consult memory, not always the most exact, ready, and perfect register of things, if they would meditate upon it, we can have recourse as often as we please to the *sacred writings*, and as long as we will converse with any part of them in silence and retirement. As to the miracles that accompanied the first publication of the Gospel, they were only intended to gain it belief as a *divine Revelation*; and therefore, when they had answered that end, were no longer needed; that is, when the truth was sufficiently established by them, and where the doctrine, on the score of its own intrinsic evidence, the

the credit of miracles conveyed down by history and tradition, and the force of other arguments, is believed to be true; which is our case. We may say of miracles, in general, what the Apostle *Paul* saith of tongues, ^a *they are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not.* And why then should not this religion, where men have free access to the fountains of *scripture-knowledge*, bring forth the fruits it did in the beginning? Nay, and that it hath done in multitudes since, who had not better opportunities for acquainting themselves with ^r *the truth as it is in Jesus*, than we have?

3. We are favoured with the same assistance; the assistance of the same *outward means and institutions*, and the same *inward grace*. We have the publick worship of God among us, the benefit of *prayer, preaching*, the administration of the *Sacraments*; we may go to the *House of God* every *Lord's-Day*, and, very frequently (though I must own, not so frequently as were to be wished, and as they did in the primitive times) to the *Lord's-Table*. We have religious Treatises in abundance, *Doctrinal, Practical, and Devotional*, and many of them excellent in each kind. These are very great helps. Besides which, we want not any internal influences and consolations that our own weakness, the disorderliness of our passions, and the many

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1 Cor. xiv. 22.

^r Eph. iv. 21.

temptations we are compassed with may require, to quicken, and fortify, and encourage us in our christian course. There is no doubt that extraordinary assistances have sometimes been vouchsafed ; but then that may be supposed to have been only when the trials were extraordinary. This we may depend upon, that our assistances shall be as our necessities are ; God will lay no burden upon us, but what he will enable us to bear ; permit no temptation to befall us in the way of our duty, but what he will enable us to overcome ; and expects no heights of perfection from us, but what he will enable us to attain. What he said to his Apostle St. *Paul*, he saith to every sincere christian, *My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* This being so, why should we not add, as that great Apostle does, *Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities* (as far as they are sinless and unavoidable) *that the power of Christ may rest upon me ?* The same grace that wrought effectually in the first christians, even in the greatest of the Apostles, shall be mighty also, though in a somewhat different sense and manner, in the meanest disciple of Christ, whose wants demand it, and who is careful not to receive it in vain. To conclude.

4. We have the promise and expectation of the same reward ; the same for kind, if not for degree ; nay, and for degree too, if the mea-

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 2.

measure of our qualification and service be equal, Does the Apostle *Paul* when he was ready to be offered, and the time of his departure was at hand, comfort himself with this, that having fought a good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith, there was from thenceforth laid up for him a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, would give him at that day? That we might not think this consolation peculiar to himself, he adds, *And not unto me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.* Not unto some, but unto all, that love the appearing of their Lord, so as seriously and diligently to prepare for it; for all these is a crown of glory laid up. In other races *all run*, but *one receiveth the prize*; whereas here every competitor that runs with patience the race set before him, is sure to conquer, and be crowned; and the prize is richly worth contending for. They that strove for mastery in the *Olympic Games* were obliged to exercise a great deal of patience and self-denial; and this they did to obtain a *corruptible crown*; corruptible indeed, being only a crown of leaves, of *Olive, Bays, or Laurel*; but the christian an *incorruptible*. O how is it possible the Example and the Reward together should not kindle us! How can we otherwise than be provoked to faith, and love, and good works, when we think of

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1 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8.

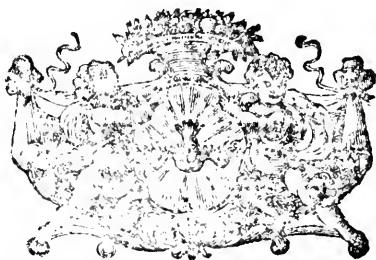
2 1 Cor. ix. 24, 25.

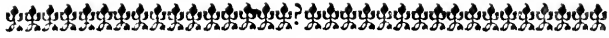
others ^w *taking the Kingdom of Heaven*, as it were, *by force*; ^x *patiently continuing in well doing*, and at last received with a ^y *well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord*; and then consider, that the gates of the heavenly city stand equally open to us, that a ^z *Place is prepared for us also*, and mansions of bliss and glory await us!

I shall conclude with those words of him who is the same yesterday, and to day, and forever, the first and the last, that was dead and is alive—^a *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

^w Mat. xi. 12. ^x Rom. ii. 7. ^y Mat. xxv. 23.

^z John xiv. 2. ^a Rev. ii. 8, and 10.



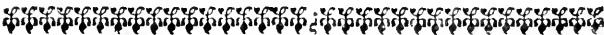


THE
EVIDENCE
FOR
OUR SAVIOUR'S
RESURRECTION
CONSIDERED:

With the IMPROVEMENT of this
IMPORTANT DOCTRINE.

In Three Sermons.

1730.





P R E F A C E.

SOME men, by their usage of Christianity, the very best Religion that ever was, plainly discover a defect of understanding, or more than common malignity of heart, or rather both; since they could not pursue it with more spite and ridicule, if it was as apparently false as it is true, and a scheme of doctrine as pernicious and absurd, as it is useful and rational. We may justly ask of those who raise this loud outcry against our Religion, and will not be satisfied unless it be delivered up to their mercy, as its divine Author once was to the Jews, Why what harm has it done? Did it not put to flight armies of errors, alike injurious and reproachful to mankind, that marched under the standards of human authority, ignorance, and superstition; restore the worship of the one true God; deliver whole nations from the worst sort of bondage; and, wheresoever it came, introduce a most happy, and surprising change in the face of things? Doth it
not

*not recommend every virtue that can contribute to the welfare of private persons, or make societies flourish? And not only by particular precepts, but in its whole frame and constitution, discountenance avarice, ambition, selfishness, uncharitableness, tyranny, and every other evil work? And for which of these kind, and most beneficial offices, is their malice so relentless against it? They may be ready to say, that it is not for a good work that they persecute it, but because, being only of men, it boldly pretends to be from God. This indeed, is what they would have the world believe; but, however sure they may seem to be of their point, let them prove Christianity to be an imposture before they treat it as such; let them shew themselves fair enemies, and not, out of a counterfeit zeal for truth, make use of lyes to support it. This, at least, Christianity may demand from them, not only as it is the Established Religion, but, as it is a Religion which they have been so very much obliged to, whether they will own it, or no: for if God had not, the second time, said, Let there be light, it is probable that these gentlemen, in spite of that superior Reason of which they make their boast, had lain under the most deplorable ignorance of the Deity, and wanted those advantages for cultivating their intellectual faculties which they now enjoy. For mere shame, therefore, let them learn to use more
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moderation, and good manners, in their opposition to the Gospel.

Among the many proofs of their Religion in which the followers of Jesus had always triumphed, Prophecies and Miracles were two of the principal; and not without reason; since a long series of predictions, delivered on such different occasions, and at such distant periods of time, all centering in one Person; and such numerous and most stupendous works performed in places of the greatest resort, and equally before friends and enemies, could not but awaken the attention of the world, as we find they did, and convince them that the Son of God was come down in the likeness of men. And yet, alas, from among ourselves have arisen those who have endeavoured, by a kind of legerdemain to rob us at once of the Prophecies of the Old Testament, and the Miracles of the New, turning them all into allegory. The conversion of the world to Christianity, was a most wonderful revolution, in the manner we explain it; but if accomplished by allegorical arguments, was abundantly more so. Why do not they say that the conversion itself was not literal, but allegorical?

*The Resurrection of our Saviour, a fact so well fenced against all reasonable objection, hath not escaped the cavils of these men. Instead of shewing wherein the main evidence, on which this article of our faith is built, is faulty or defective, they are very angry because
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the whole affair was not conducted just as they would have it, and every thing done which they fancy was expedient. Were the objections they offer real difficulties with them, which they would be glad to see cleared, and not the wretched shifts of a baffled cause, intended only to puzzle and confound the weak and injudicious, enough hath been said by several good Writers to give them satisfaction; or supposing there were some incidents in the history of this event which could not be fully accounted for, yet they would do in this case as all modest and ingenious minds do in the question about Creation and Providence. A thousand things, say they to themselves, demonstrate the world to be the workmanship of God, and under his care; therefore, the few things, that have contrary appearance, are not to be regarded; having been designed with the same perfect wisdom as the rest, though that wisdom be less obvious and discernible. Thus here; the Resurrection of Christ is out of dispute, if the joint testimony of God and men can make it so; and, being thus firmly established, we ought not to be offended, though we should meet with some things in relation to it, the reasons of which we do not well understand; for this may easily be, and yet God have very good reasons for ordering the whole transaction in the manner he did, without taking counsel of us; that of the Apostle Paul being an everlasting truth, that the foolishness of God (what poor, short-sighted, yet

yet conceited mortals are apt to account so) is wiser than men.

The argument from the Witnesses of Christ's Resurrection, considered with all its circumstances, is I think unanswerable. And it may deserve our notice, that in respect of this particular argument, the advantage is on our side above many, if not most, of the first converts to Christianity; forasmuch as we have the evidence more entire in the sacred records, which set before us, in one view the characters of the Apostles, their labours and sufferings, their unanimity, constancy, and success, in their common cause; whereas, they who lived at a great distance from Jerusalem, from whence the Gospel first set out, and embraced this new Religion, before these things were consigned to writing or authentick accounts of them could be spread abroad, or the Apostles had finished their testimony; could not presently apprehend the great force of this testimony, which gathered strength with time. I have done all the justice I could to this argument in the following Sermons; and enlarged on some parts of it, which, though in my opinion very considerable, have not that I know of been much insisted on. And yet, after all, I must observe what is hinted at in the Sermons, that the main weight of this Article of our Creed does not rest upon the testimony of the Apostles, but on the witness which God bore them with signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts

gifts of the Holy Ghost, which would have indubitably confirmed the doctrine of the Resurrection of Jesus, if the first publishers of it had received it only in the way of revelation, as they did other doctrines of the Gospel. And therefore, if the testimony of the Apostles was not of itself sufficient, yet, surely, since we have greater witness than theirs, even that of the Spirit in its miraculous gifts, and the most astonishing success of our Religion, we have no reason to complain, as if we were obliged, under severe penalties, to believe things for which we have not answerable evidence.

The knowledge of facts being of little or no importance, but with regard to the consequences that attend them, and the instructions they yield, I have therefore endeavoured to point out the several uses of this doctrine of our Lord's Resurrection; from which it will appear, that as the professed design of the Gospel, in all the parts of it, is to make men wise and holy and happy, so the contemplation of this glorious truth is in a particular manner admirably adapted to answer these ends.





S E R M O N X.

On the Resurrection of JESUS.

LUKE XXIV. 34.

The Lord is risen indeed.

ON the day of our Saviour's Resurrection, as two of his disciples were going to a village, called *Emmaus*, and talking together of all that had lately come to pass in relation to their master, *Jesus himself drew near, and went with them; but their eyes were holden, that they should not know him:* by which nothing more seems to be meant, than that their sorrow had so engrossed their attention, or the appearance of their master from the dead was so entirely unexpected, that they made no observation of his person. Nor during the rest of the conversation, in which *he expounded to them from*
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the scriptures the things concerning himself, as the promised Messiah, did it once enter into their thoughts, that it was he; till having accepted their invitation to spend the evening with them, *he was known to them in breaking of bread.* Indeed, *while he was opening the scriptures, on the way, their hearts burned within them,* as they afterwards take notice; they were sensible of a peculiar and divine virtue in what he said, which at once enlightened and warmed them. But *when he sat at meat with them,* the circumstances of majesty and tenderness which accompanied the action of *breaking of bread,* inimitable by any other person, together with a secret and powerful operation of his Spirit, gave the first awakening to their astonished minds; and they no sooner took the hint, and fixed their eyes a little more curiously upon him, but they saw plainly that it was their beloved Lord, with whom they had been conversing; the situation in which he placed himself, that they might have the better view of him, contributing, we may reasonably suppose, to the discovery.

But why, after they knew him, did he immediately *vanish out of their sight,* ἀφανίσθη ἐναντίῳ αὐτῶν, cease to be seen, by going from them? The plain reason of this seems to have been his designing to shew himself in a larger assembly that very evening, where these two, with the rest of the disciples, would

would have an opportunity of satisfying themselves as fully as they could wish. On Christ's leaving them, *they rise up the same hour, and returning to Jerusalem, find the Eleven gathered together, and those that were with them, saying, the Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared unto Simon.* Which words we cannot well suppose to have been spoken by these *two* Disciples to the Apostles; since, besides that the word λεγοντας, *saying*, is in the wrong case to be applied to them, it can hardly be imagined they would have begun so abruptly to Christ's having appeared to *Simon Peter*, when there is not the least mention made of it in the preceding history. Nor, on the other hand, can the words have been spoken by the Apostles to these *two* Disciples; because, if they had been persuaded that *the Lord was risen indeed* they would not afterwards, when *Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, have been affrighted, and thought that they had seen a spirit.* It remains therefore, that we consider these words as uttered by them that are said to have been with the *Eleven*, and who being entered but a little before, were giving them an account of what they had heard of this great occurrence, at that time the only subject of their discourse, particularly, of Christ's being seen by *Peter*; in the midst of which relation, the *two* Disciples came in, and heard them say, that *the Lord*

was risen indeed; after which they also proceed to tell the company what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

Without going any further in the history, or laying the particulars of it together, as related by the several *Evangelists*, and reconciling the seeming differences that are found among them, I shall immediately pass to the consideration of the words, having first formed them into this following Proposition.

It is a certain truth, and capable of the most satisfactory proof, that Jesus, our Lord, is risen from the dead.

In the management of this subject, I shall,

- I. Lay down a few preliminary Observations.
- II. Set the proof of our Lord's Resurrection in the fullest and clearest light I am able.

I. The preliminary Observations are these. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel—This doctrine might have stood firm, though it had not been supported by the testimony of eye-witnesses, as it now is—Upon which account, the goodness of God is to be thankfully observed, and acknowledged in giving
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the world such abundant evidence for this momentous article; not what is barely sufficient, but more than enough, to convince all unprejudiced persons—Finally, the nature of the thing attested is not such as to render the testimony concerning it incredible.

1. The Resurrection of our blessed Saviour is a fundamental doctrine of Christianity. Take away this article, the whole frame of our religion falls to the ground. The Apostle *Paul* therefore takes notice to the *Corinthians*, that it was *ev απωλοις*, among the first things which he had received, and delivered to them, ^a *that Christ rose upon the third day, according to the scriptures.* And further on in the same Chapter, he shews them what would naturally follow from the supposition of Christ's not being risen; namely that the Apostles were *false Witnesses*, and their *preaching vain*; and as for those who by their testimony had been persuaded to embrace the christian religion, their *faith was vain*, and they *were yet in their sins*, in a state of guilt and condemnation, for any benefit they could receive from the death of Christ. And therefore, if this was all they had to trust to, they were most miserable, as having no just and well-grounded expectations that reached beyond the present life.

The importance of this doctrine is likewise very evidently intimated in the first Chapter of the *Acts of the Apostles*, where the *Eleven*, being upon the choice of a proper person to compleat their number, specify this as the end or design of his office, ver. 22. *that he might be a witness with them of Christ's Resurrection.* There are other necessary articles of the christian faith, which the Apostles in their preaching were to insist upon; but, waving all mention of these, the chief business of an Apostle is declared to be, *to witness the Resurrection of their Master*; as much as to say, all the parts of the christian doctrine depend on the truth of this single fact; for if Christ rose from the dead, it is an undeniable argument of his being really all that he gave himself out to be, *the anointed of God, the redeemer of Israel*, an innocent and holy person; that he was *the son of God* incarnate, and that he died to make *satisfaction* for the sins of the world. On the contrary, if he did not rise, he was a *deceiver*, and we are *deceived*. Without this article therefore our faith in Christ would not only be imperfect, but as mere a fiction as a castle in the air.

II. The doctrine of Christ's Resurrection might have stood firm, though it had not been supported as it now is, by the testimony of eye-witnesses. Let us suppose our Saviour had told his Disciples that he would
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rise again on the third day, and ascend to heaven, without shewing himself to any of them after his Resurrection; though upon this supposition they would not have had the satisfaction of seeing their Lord when risen, nor we the satisfaction arising from their testimony, yet neither they nor we would have had any just ground to doubt of his being risen, and ascended up into heaven. It would have been enough that he foretold these things, who by his doctrine and miracles while he lived, and the prediction of his death, with several such circumstances as could not fall under human foresight, had sufficiently established his character of a *divine messenger*. How could he, a man of no learning and education, have taught such a doctrine, and performed such works if he had not been of God? If he had not been endued with a supernatural knowledge of events, how was it possible for him to know, not only that he should be put to death, but that it should be at *Jerusalem*,^b and at that particular Passover to which he was then going? That one of his Disciples should betray him, pointing him out by this sign, that it was the same who *dipped his hand with him in the dish*? That another, *before the cock had crowed twice that night, should thrice deny him*? That the chief Priests and Scribes should *condemn him*

B b 3 to

to death, and yet not execute their own sentence, but deliver him to the Gentiles (i. e. to the Romans) to mock and to scourge, and to crucify him?

These things coming to pass exactly as foretold, were a demonstration of a *Spirit of Prophecy* in him that foretold them; which *Spirit* assisting him in predicting the time, the manner, and circumstances of his Death, cannot, without the utmost absurdity, be imagined to leave him under the power of a deluded imagination, when at the same time, he as expressly spoke of his Resurrection; or suffer him to speak of that as future, which he himself did not believe would ever happen. To which things, if we add the predictions of several remarkable occurrences after his Death, that these predictions were verified or made good by the event, and that he appealed to them before-hand as proofs of his Resurrection and Ascension, (such as *the descent of the holy Ghost, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the success of the Gospel*; if, I say, we add the consideration of all this to what was before mentioned) we shall be forced to acknowledge, that the proof of Christ's Resurrection would have been very satisfactory to all reasonable persons, even though there had been none of his acquaintance who could say they had seen him after he was risen; and we might have

have applied to these in general what our Lord spoke on a particular occasion, *° I tell you before it is come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye may know that I am he.*

I take notice of this, to shew the disingenuity and groundlessness of an insinuation made by some, as if there was too much cause to suspect the truth of Christ's Resurrection from what is said, *Acts x. 41. That God shewed him not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before by him.* Without entering into the reasons of this conduct of divine Providence, (that is, why Christ, being risen, appeared to a select number, and not to the body of the Jewish people, to friends, and not to enemies,) or insisting on an observation, however just, that the opposition here intended is not properly of a few to many, or of friends to foes, but of persons qualified to give witness in this matter, having been well acquainted with Jesus, to those that were not; I shall only desire you to reflect that this is so far from justifying those who shall call in question the Resurrection of our Saviour, that if there had not been a single person, who could affirm he had conversed with Christ after his return to life again, yet (having never promised that he would be seen by any after his Resurrection, which must likewise be supposed) what went before our Saviour's Death, and what

B b 4 followed

followed, being impartially considered, would amount to a very plain proof of his being risen, and ascended to the right hand of God. Wherefore,

III. The goodness of God is to be thankfully observed and acknowledged in giving the world such abundant evidence for the truth of this momentous article; being not barely sufficient to convince all unprejudiced persons, but more than enough to this end. Herein our gracious God hath consulted the weakness of human nature, and complied with the diffidence of the human heart; hath left all those without excuse, who will not see what is so manifest and obvious, and provided for the fullest assurance of humble souls; that as the proof of this great truth is abundant, so their faith, and hope, and joy, might be the same. The Author of some late Papers on this subject, hath shewn, with a clearness of reasoning, which approaches demonstration, that the evidence for the truth of this fact, by which all mankind were to be influenced, and not the nation of the *Jews* only, would have been lessened by Christ's appearing publicly, whether it be supposed that many of those to whom he appeared, continued obstinate in their infidelity, which is not impossible, or all the *Jews* with one voice had believed in him. But should we grant that the evidence would have been vastly greater on that supposition,

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as perhaps we must grant, that God in his Providence could have made it so, by a concurrence of extraordinary circumstances, or by employing some other means; even so great as to overbear the most stubborn incredulity; yet forasmuch as the evidence vouchsafed exceeds what could have been demanded by any reasonable person, and the evidence required by our modern unbelievers, must be such as to put it out of the power of the most unreasonable men to reject it, are we not obliged to acknowledge that God hath taken the way most agreeable to the goodness of an infinitely wise Being, and the righteous Governor of the world; who, while he condescends to regard the infirmities of his creatures, will not humour their pride, and leave no room for the trial and exercise of their virtue.

IV. The nature of the thing attested is not such as to render the testimony concerning it incredible, The thing attested, is *the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead*; which would indeed be altogether incredible, were it either *impossible* for God to raise the dead; or, from the reason of the thing *absurd*, to suppose that he raised our Saviour; or the fact, though in itself *possible*, would not admit of proof: but neither of these can be justly pretended, which leaves the testimony concerning this fact in its full force.

I. It is not *impossible* for God to raise the dead; they that think so *err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God*; for the power of God being almighty, reaches to every thing that does not imply a contradiction; which, it is plain the Resurrection of the Dead doth not. To raise a dead body, is nothing else but to put life into it a second time. And how is this any more impossible or difficult, than inspiring life into it at first? Was the Body resolved into dust, it would be only in the same state the Body of *Adam* was in before his creation. His Body was framed out of the dust; and, for the same reason, as his was taken from dust which had never before been a Body; when a Body is turned into dust, what should hinder its being restored to its old form again? But here the Body, said to be raised, had not *seen corruption*; had been in the grave but part of *three* days, and therefore surely was not so intirely ruined but that it might be sited up again by infinite wisdom and power, and become the habitation of the Soul that formerly lived in it, and actuated it. And that which shews the *possibility* of this beyond all modest contradiction, is, that Christ himself had raised the dead, and among others one that had been dead *four* days, which was a longer time than his Body lay in the grave. So that all the witnesses to the Resurrection

urrection of the *Ruler's Daughter*, the *Widow of Nain's Son*, and of *Lazarus*, who were a mixed multitude, consisting of enemies as well as of friends, might be summoned to give an evidence, though not for the *fact* of Christ's Resurrection, yet for the *possibility* of it. And why might not one reason of our Lord's not shewing himself indifferently to all the *Jews* after his Resurrection be, that they had rendered themselves unworthy of such a condescension by the no-use, or even ill use, they made of his raising other dead persons in the publick view?

2. As the Resurrection of Jesus is not a thing *impossible*, so neither in the reason of things *absurd* to suppose. On the contrary, it is highly credible, that the Son of God being *delivered into the hands of wicked men, to be crucified and slain*, he should take that life again which he voluntarily laid down for the sins of the world, that hereby his own innocence might be cleared, the truth of his religion vindicated, and several other great and valuable ends answered. This I say is highly credible, since so excellent a Person cannot but be dear to God, and in giving testimony to him, by raising him from the dead, God at the same time gives testimony to his own truth, displays the greatness of his power, and presents the world with a very illustrious and useful scene
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of Providence; infomuch that to assert the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, considering him as the Person the scriptures declare him to be, is to assert a thing altogether worthy of God. It may be objected, that God saw not fit to raise any of the *ancient Prophets*, who were persecuted and slain for the truth. And why must *Jesus* have this peculiar honour? The answer is easy, that the two cases differ widely. They were only restorers of an old religion, *Jesus* was the teacher of a new; a Lawgiver as well as Reformer, and to be acknowledged such, not by the nation of the *Jews* only, but by all mankind. He was a Person in *dignity* vastly superior to any of the sons of men, and he was a *publick* Person; his *Death* being in the nature of a universal *Expiation*, his *Resurrection* of a universal *Pledge*. And, perhaps, if we lay aside these two last considerations (*viz.* the *dignity*, and *publickness* of our Saviour's Person) any other might not have been thought weighty enough to occasion such an extraordinary act of Providence, as raising Christ from the dead, *never more to see corruption*; which those christians will do well to reflect upon, who, while they believe the Resurrection of *Jesus*, esteem him to have been a *mere man*, and his *Death* no more than an Example of Patience, and Constancy in suffering for the Truth.

3. The Resurrection of Christ is not only a thing *possible*, but attended with such circumstances as to admit of the most undeniable proof, after the manner of other facts. The whole turns upon this single question, *viz. whether a person may not be certain of the truth and reality of things, for which he hath all the evidence that sense can give him?* May not any one be sure that he sees and converses with those that are well known to him? That what he sees and hears and feels, is not a delusion? Now if this be too plain to be made a question, then it is every whit as plain, that our Lord's Resurrection was what his Disciples might be certain of; being a matter of sense, and subject not to the trial of one of the senses only, as sight or hearing, but of several, all agreeing in the same report; not for once, but at different times; not for a little while, but for the space of forty days. Therefore St. *John* begins his *First Epistle* thus, *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,—declare we unto you.* As St. *Luke* does the *Acts of the Apostles* after much the same manner; *The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the holy Ghost*
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had given commandments unto the Apostles whom he had chosen; to whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. What were these many infallible proofs to which St. Luke refers? Why they saw him face to face, had familiar discourse with him, eat and drank together. That he was not an unbodied spectre or apparition, as they were ready to fancy, they might be convinced from the argument he himself made use of, ^f *Handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have; and when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.* And as they had no reason to question whether it was a Body, and not a Spirit, that they conversed with, so they had as little reason to doubt, whether it was the Body of their crucified Master; since, besides the print of the nails, which was visible in his hands and his feet, they had been too long and too well acquainted with him before his Death, as well as too intimate with him after his Resurrection, not to be able to tell, whether it was the same Person.

Those whom he chose to be witnesses of his Resurrection were not strangers, but persons thoroughly acquainted with him, his domestick servants, and constant followers; and therefore, when a Twelfth Apostle was

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^f Luke xxiv. 39, 40.

to be chosen, to be a witness with the rest of Christ's Resurrection, that there might be no manner of exception against him on this account, they very prudently lay down this qualification. *Wherefore of these men who have accompanied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John till the same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his Resurrection.* How could they have used more care to obviate all objections in this matter? This shews that the Apostles could not be deceived through ignorance, mistaking one Person for another, nor through strength of fancy and conceit, taking that for a real Person which was only the shadow of one, or the creature of their own brains, since both these suppositions are precluded; the former by their perfect knowledge of him, the latter by their open and near, and frequent converse with him; which made it impossible they should be deluded, unless we suppose them to be madmen, which both their writings and their conduct sufficiently disprove; not to add, that if they were mad, the world must have been still madder to hearken to their frantick stories.*

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‡ Acts i. 21, 22.

* What further clears the Disciples from the charge of Enthusiasm, is this, that if it had been only strength
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By the way, I would here observe the ground upon which the Apostles are called *chosen witnesses*; they were not *chosen* as persons that might be more safely trusted with a secret, and better fitted to carry on an imposture; but that the relation of this important fact, might be less liable to cavil, when it came from such competent witnesses; persons that could speak with the greatest certainty, and were therefore *chosen* preferably to all others; so that the thing we learn from that famous passage, *Acts* x. 41. is the singular caution that was used in this affair, that there might be no handle ministered for suspicion, whether they that published the Resurrection of Christ,

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of imagination, and weakness of judgment, that drew them in to think and report, that their Master was risen, his Body notwithstanding this mistake of theirs, would have been remaining in the grave; and so there would have been no need for the soldiers being ordered to say, that *his Disciples came by night, and stole him away*. It is plain from hence, that the Body was missing, whether raised from the dead, or conveyed away by his friends. Will the enemies of our religion join with the *Jewish Council* in their charge against the Disciples, as having stolen him away? But then, who does not see, that the Disciples must have known him not to be risen? And therefore are not to be considered, and treated as weak people, under a delusion; but as cheats and impostors, whose aim was to make the world believe what they did not believe themselves; a suggestion which is fully answered under the second head. On the other hand; if the Disciples did not steal him away, those that can are desired to account for his being removed out of the sepulchre, any otherwise than by granting his Resurrection.

supposing them clear of an intention to deceive others, might not be deceived themselves. When all the particulars of the evangelical history concerning this matter are laid together, and impartially considered, any such suggestion as this will appear entirely groundless.—Having laid down these preliminary Observations, I now pass on,

II. To the direct proof of our Lord's Resurrection. And here I shall argue from the number of the witnesses—their character—their steadfastness in the testimony given by them—from a comparison of the witnesses before, with themselves after, the time they affirmed Christ to be risen—the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them—and finally, from the consequence of their testimony; both what they might probably have expected, if they had been false witnesses, and that which actually followed—By any one who seriously weighs all these things, I am persuaded, the Evidence for the truth of our Saviour's Resurrection will be acknowledged as great as the importance of it.

1. The truth of this memorable fact may be presumed from the *number* of the witnesses. This, at least, is one good step towards the proof of it. The *Twelve Apostles* were the principal evidence, a number sufficient to ascertain the fact, if no more were

to be produced. But, in the *Acts* of the *Apostles*, Chap. i. ver. 9, and 15. we read of a *Hundred and Twenty*, who were eye-witnesses to the Ascension of Jesus; a privilege, that will abundantly compensate for any supposed defect in the testimony of some of them, on account of their not having the same exact and full knowledge of Christ's Person as the *Apostles* had; for granting they had not, yet when they affirm themselves to have seen a Person, who passed for Jesus Christ, (and, was, they had good reason to think from their own acquaintance with him, the very same) *taken up into heaven*; as we must allow the ascension of this Person, assuming the name of Jesus, to be a proof of his being the Person so called, so the testimony of these *Hundred and Twenty* concerning Christ's Ascension may, and ought to be regarded as equally strong for his Resurrection, which is presupposed by the former. We can go yet further; for St. Paul tells us that ^h *Christ was seen by above Five Hundred Brethren at once*; and that *the greater part of them were alive at that time, though some of them were fallen asleep*. Now this Apostle was too wise, not to say too good a man, to have affirmed this, if it had not been true, because it had been a very easy thing to have disproved him. He could not have had the face to have told the *Corinthians*, who were christians, (and
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^h 1 Cor. xv. 6.

so must know, or have opportunities of knowing, if he spoke truth) that the greater part of *Five Hundred* persons, then living, vouched the Resurrection of Christ, and publicly declared that they had seen him, if indeed there had been no more than the *Twelve Apostles*, and a few others, that stood forth as witnesses of this fact. He could not expect to be believed in this case on his bare Word; and therefore had more sense than to appeal to witnesses that were not in being; since the *Corinthians* had nothing to do but to call for their names, and the place of their abode, and there had been an end of his confidence, and his argument, together.

We may therefore rest satisfied that at the time of St. Paul's writing his First Epistle to the *Corinthians*, (which is supposed to have been about the year of our Lord *Fifty-Seven*; that is, not much more than twenty years after his death) there were some hundreds of witnesses, either true or false, of Christ's Resurrection. And that they were not false, but true witnesses, may, with a high degree of probability, be inferred from their *number*. For, first, it can hardly be thought that so many would agree in a *known* falsehood, from which they had no advantage to hope for; I say, in a *known* falsehood, it being next to impossible that in a matter of fact, and so circumstantiated as that was, they should be deceived; for which reason, if Christ was not risen,

his Resurrection must be a fable of their own contriving. And how unlikely is it that so many should conspire together to tell a most solemn lye, out of pure love to it, or merely for lyeing-fake?

Again, the greater the *number*, the greater must be the difficulty of preserving a harmony and consent among them; and where the *number* is so considerable, as in the present case, and the harmony so entire, their agreement is too remarkable for any reasonable man to suppose it could proceed from any thing else but truth, which is naturally attended with consistency and uniformity, while a lye as naturally begets an inconsistent variety. That which finishes this argument from the *number* of the witnesses is, that if the Resurrection of Jesus had been a fabulous story, they who invented it, and were the head managers of the cheat, would not have admitted so great a *number* into the secret, because the likelihood of keeping the secret would be proportionably less, as the *number* intrusted with it was greater. In a forgery the more there are who know it, so much the more danger is there of its being discovered. The persons that made up the confederacy would have been jealous of each other (as brethren in iniquity are wont to be, when a pardon with a reward is offered to him that shall convict the rest) and, out of fear they should be betrayed, would have been
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tempted to be the first to betray. The *Apostles* could not but know this and have reflected, that of the *Twelve*, which was their *number*, one, out of a principle of avarice, was a traitor; and therefore in case, when they attempted to convert the world to the belief of their Master's Resurrection, they had known it to be a falsity, they would never have engaged *Five Hundred* in the same plot, but contenting themselves with a small *number* for witnesses, (to the end they might be more safe from detection) would have endeavoured to draw in others upon the credit of their report. No other account then can be given of such a *number* of witnesses than that they were conscious to their own integrity, and were real, not counterfeit witnesses of what they affirm; this is the argument from the *number* of the witnesses.

II. I shall now consider their *character*, which will be found to add mighty weight to their testimony. They were men of great *honesty* and *simplicity*—As *honest* men, they could not design such a notorious cheat, as this of imposing the belief of Christ's Resurrection upon the world must have been, if the fact was not true; as men of uncommon *plainness* and *simplicity*, they would not have been able to do this, if they had designed and endeavoured it.

1. They were men of an *honest* character, and as such could not design such a

notorious cheat as this of imposing the belief of Christ's Resurrection upon the world would have been, if the fact was only pretended. Their character in this regard was so well established, and their behaviour so irreproachable and inoffensive, that we do not hear their bitterest enemies objecting any thing to their *moral* conduct. The reason is, that they have no handle for it. They have been sometimes represented as a company of fools, or whimsical persons, as men under a delusion, but not as *vitious* and *immoral*. Their *writings* may be appealed to for a proof of the contrary, in which there are all the marks of a genuine virtue and piety, of the most generous charity to mankind, and the most upright intentions that *writings* can carry in them. So may the *credit* they met with in the world; since, if their conversation had not been fair and unblameable, free from all appearance of a sensual disposition, and of low and treacherous designs, they could never have found so good a reception among the most virtuous, and have made so many converts, among others, to practical godliness, and a heavenly life; besides which, they had no gain to make, no interest to serve by a fraud, (as shall afterwards be shewn) which cunning designing men, who at bottom have nothing of goodness in them, never fail of proposing. There is therefore very good reason,

reason, why we should let them pass for *honest* men. Upon which I proceed to argue thus.

If they were *honest men*, they were certainly *credible witnesses*; for they appeal in the most solemn manner to the righteous and omniscient God, for the truth of what they say, which none but men far advanced in wickedness would have done, knowing it to be false; they deliver their testimony in the name of God, and vouch his authority for the doctrine they taught; professing themselves to have received it from heaven, and asserting the Resurrection of their Master, as well as pretending to work miracles by the finger of God, in confirmation of it. This, I say, is what men of *common honesty* would not have done, supposing they knew it to be all a fiction; because, as the Apostle *Paul* expresses it, *if Christ was not risen, they were found false witnesses of God, having testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up.* But besides this impiety towards God, in affixing his tremendous name to a known untruth, they must have been some of the worst of men on another account; I mean, in endeavouring to delude the world, when that delusion must be so fatal to them. They could not but be aware of the ruin it would bring on great numbers of those who

should embrace their cause; foreseeing which they would become chargeable with all this mischief, and must be pronounced void of all humanity, in direct opposition to the notion which their doctrine and their lives would give one of them. But now, if there be no foundation for such hard thoughts of the first Preachers of Christianity, as if they were destitute of all regard to God or men, we must confess there is none for calling in question their testimony concerning the Resurrection of Jesus.

2. They appear to have been men of uncommon *plainness* and *simplicity*; so that if they had been minded to put a cheat on the world, they were not fitted for such an adventure. They had been obscurely educated, were ignorant of the arts of leading a multitude, and of managing the passions of men, so as thereby to cast a cloud before their understandings. Nay, they do not seem to have received from *nature* any gifts for this purpose. They did not abound in that craft which is required to the carrying on a publick imposture; (if we may guess by the plainness of their outside, their artless manner of conversing with the world, and the spirit of simplicity that reigns in all they have written) or they abound in it to such a degree, as under an appearance of openness, which is not to be seen through, by the most sagacious observer, to conceal
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the greatest cunning and reserve that ever was. But if the Apostles and first Preachers of Christ's Resurrection were such very cunning men, why had they not shewn it in dressing up another sort of fable, which would have been more pleasing to the world, and more beneficial to themselves? At least, such cunning men would never have embarked in so desperate a design, and embroiled themselves in so many difficulties and dangers, as, in the sequel, will appear to have attended the preaching of a crucified and a risen Jesus. The sum is, that the *character* of the witnesses, as *honest* and *plain* men, renders their testimony altogether credible.

III. It is a great accession to the strength of this argument, that they were so *steady* and *unshaken* in their testimony; were never known to flinch from the cause they were engaged in, and to deny what they had once affirmed; that they were not discouraged by all the inconveniences and hardships they went through, which were not a few; were in nothing terrified by the threats of their adversaries, nor to be silenced by any thing but death; not by the fear, not by the pain of it, but by death itself, which at the same time that it cut off their testimony, compleated the evidence of it. To what can we attribute this *constancy* and *perseverance*, but to an inward conscioufness that they suffered for the truth? And
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that, suffering for this, they should be amply rewarded in another, and better world? It is with this view that St. Paul in proving his Apostleship, alledges his sufferings as a very good argument of it. ^k *Are they ministers of Christ? I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft; of the Jews five times received I forty stripes but one; thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.* By all which he insinuates, that the *false Apostles* would not be content to suffer after this manner. Whereas, not only St. Paul, but all the *true Apostles* of our Lord were called forth to the most fiery trials; which makes this Apostle say concerning himself and the rest of his brethren. ^l *I think that God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed unto death; for we are made a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men. Even unto this present hour, we hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are*

^k 2 Cor. xi. 23,—28.

^l 1 Cor. iv. 9,—13.

are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place, &c. We are the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things unto this day. They were characterized by their boldness in danger, and their patience in tribulation; insomuch that instead of ceasing to speak in the name of Jesus, as their enemies by the cruelest usage endeavoured to make them do, it was matter of rejoicing to them that they were counted worthy to suffer shame and reproach, and death for his name.

This firm adherence of so many persons to the cause of Christ, their brave contempt of pain and poverty, of hunger and nakedness, of imprisonment and death, (evils so much dreaded by the generality of mankind) would have been very strange, if it had been only for their *belief* that they had suffered such things, and a probable argument that the Spirit of Christ animated and assisted them in an extraordinary manner. But to this a plausible answer might have been returned, by instanceing in those who under the power of delusion have shewn the greatest fearlessness of mind, and borne up against torments and death with an invincible courage and resolution. Whereas, the argument from the *constancy* of the *Apostles* in suffering, will not admit of any such evasion; for it being a *matter of fact* that

that they testified, (not a bare persuasion, or opinion, to which they adhered) namely, that christ was risen, and that they had seen, and conversed with him after his Resurrection, they could not possibly be deluded, (as was proved before) but must know what they affirmed to be true, or false. If they knew it to be true, we have what we are arguing for. If it be said, that they knew it to be false, the answer is easy, that it is altogether incredible that such *numbers* would be so obstinate in the defence of a known falsehood, that no terrors would affright them, no flatteries or offers would bribe them, but they should continue in the same story, when they had nothing to get by it, and for the sake of it must quit all that is valuable in this life; not to mention the hazard they would run of plunging themselves into greater miseries after death. Such a conduct as this is so prodigiously absurd and foolish, that we can never imagine any man in his sober senses, and much less so many men (having all the appearance too of considerate persons) to be guilty of it. Upon this account we are to distinguish between the sufferings of the witnesses to Christ's Resurrection, and of those who received it on their testimony. For though the patience and steadfastness of these latter may be improved as an argument

ment of their being in earnest persuaded of the truth of Christ's Resurrection, and of the *Apostles* being competent and credible witnesses of a thing which they would otherwise have been hardly able to bring the world to the belief of; as likewise that the *Apostles* were more than pretenders to a power of working miracles; nay, though to one who considers the matter all round, such numerous Examples of the noblest fortitude are indications of a super-natural power and assistance; yet it must be owned, that they do not so immediately evince the truth of this particular fact, as theirs who openly appeared and suffered, as eye-witnesses, of our Saviour's Resurrection; which (I repeat it) they would never have done, without being assured of the truth of it. Being assured of this, they had not only the support of a good conscience, but of a future, most glorious recompence, which made them triumph over all the malice of the world, and rejoice in the immortality of their cause, as their own.

iv. Let us compare the witnesses *before* with themselves *after*, the time they affirmed Christ to be risen; and we shall be convinced by the remarkable change of their notions and temper, and conduct, that their Lord was risen from the dead as they said.

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This part of the argument having been little considered, I shall be the larger upon it, and endeavour to shew the force of it in several instances.—But of this in the next Discourse.





S E R M O N XI.

On the Resurrection of JESUS.

LUKE XXIV. 34.

The Lord is risen indeed.

I N the preceding Discourse I observed, that these words might be formed into this Proposition.

It is a certain truth, and capable of the most satisfactory proof, that Jesus, our Lord, is risen from the dead.

In the management of this subject, I proposed,

I. To lay down a few preliminary Observations.

I. The Resurrection of our blessed Saviour is a fundamental doctrine of Christianity.

II. The doctrine of Christ's Resurrection might have stood firm, though it had not been

been supported, as it now is, by the testimony of eye-witnesses.

III. The goodness of God is to be thankfully observed and acknowledged in giving the world such abundant evidence for the truth of this momentous article; being not barely sufficient to convince all unprejudiced persons, but more than enough to this end.

IV. The nature of the thing attested is not such as to render the testimony concerning it incredible.

Having laid down these preliminary Observations, I passed on,

II. To the direct proof of our Lord's Resurrection.

I. The truth of this memorable fact may be presumed from the *number* of the witnesses.

II. If we consider their *character* it will be found to add mighty weight to their testimony.

III. It is a great accession to the strength of this argument, that they were so *steady* and *unshaken* in their testimony.

I now proceed,

IV. To compare the witnesses *before*, with themselves *after*, the time they affirmed Christ to be risen; and we shall be convinced by the remarkable change in their notions, and temper,

per, and conduct, that their Lord was risen from the dead as they said. This part of the argument having been little considered, I shall be the larger upon it, and endeavour to shew the force of it in several instances.

1. They were once ignorant and unapprehensive ; as indeed might well enough be expected from the meanness of their birth, and breeding, and the nature of their occupations, being many of them poor fishermen. Their Master reproaches them with the dulness of their understanding in matters that did not require any great reach to apprehend ; and, which is more, they themselves have in their ^a history recorded instances of this, though so little to their own honour. This is the true character of the first Publishers of Christianity. And whence then (to ask the same question concerning them which was once asked concerning their Master) had these men so much learning, having never learned, as afterwards to preach the most excellent doctrine that ever was ; a doctrine so rational, so divine, so every way worthy of God, and suited to the better part of man, his soul, and to the necessities of his condition, as a fallen creature, that nothing like it is to be found in the writings of the Philosophers? And yet these latter were all their days used to study and speculation, while

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^a Mat. xv. 16. Mark vii. 18.

the former from mending their nets were called to be *fishers of men*; and, without any preparation after the usual methods, surprized the world, till then buried in darkness, with the heavenly light of their doctrine.

These ^b*Galileans*, as their enemies called them in contempt, these men of low and groveling thoughts, taught their hearers a religion that excelled any which they or others had ever before known; and which makes the thing more extraordinary, a religion very different from that which they had been brought up in; for to any one that shall compare the *Jewish* and the *Christian* Religions together, how low and carnal will the precepts of the one appear, how spiritual and exalted those of the other! And when they have been trained up in such gross and secular notions, without the advantage of a liberal education to enlarge and brighten their faculties; when, notwithstanding the instructions they received from their Master, they were so little improved during his life, how comes it to pass that some time after they are cured of their ignorance and their prejudices together, and shew themselves to be more learned in the science of Salvation, than men of the finest parts, and most generous education? Does not this prove that their knowledge came by *Inspiration*; and that this *Inspiration* was after the time of Christ's Resurrection, according to their

^b Acts ii. 7.

their account of it, and therefore a most glorious demonstration of his being risen? They were *taught of God*, and *spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*; the whole frame of the Christian Religion proclaims it: it was after they became witnesses of our Lord's Resurrection, that they were thus *inspired*, thus divinely taught; from which it is natural to conclude that they were true witnesses, since it is contrary to all Reason to suppose that God should enable men to publish a heavenly doctrine, in conjunction with, and with an express design to confirm a false testimony.

2. Once they were unbelieving, afterwards fully convinced of what they before doubted of; or at least pretended to be so convinced, at a time when they could have no inducement to make shew of such a conviction; if it was not real. The Resurrection of Christ was so far from their thoughts, that when he took them aside, and told them very particularly what should happen to him, that *he should be put to death; and that on the third day he should rise again; they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.* And the prediction of Christ's Resurrection was not more unintelligible to them at this time, than his Resurrection itself was incredible to them afterwards; they were as

backward to receive the one as the other. Their hopes of Jesus being the Messiah, seemed to have expired when he died. *The women prepared spices for the embalming his body,* which they would not have done, had they expected his Resurrection; the account which these women gave of his Resurrection was entertained as an idle story; the *Two Disciples* travelling to *Emmaus*, own they trusted it had been he that should redeem Israel; as much as to say, their trust now failed them. When he stood in the midst of the *Eleven*, and the rest that were assembled with them, they were so far from believing him risen, or from a disposition to believe it, as to fancy that they saw a Spirit; nay, *Thomas* who did not happen to be present when Jesus first appeared to them, would not believe till he had seen *in his hand the print of the nails*, and was invited to *put his finger into the print of the nails, and to thrust his hand into his side*. All this, instead of favouring of credulity, is rather an indication of a contrary extreme.

And to what then shall we attribute this sudden change in the behaviour of Christ's Disciples? That they, who at first were so backward to believe his Resurrection, should soon after boldly appear as witnesses of it? To what can we attribute this, but to their being entirely satisfied, by seeing and conversing with their Lord, that he was indeed risen from the Dead? To say, they made a shew
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of being satisfied when they were not, is absurd; because they could have no temptation to do this, and must have very strong reasons not to do it. To see men at first so incredulous, and after this such firm witnesses to the truth of a fact they themselves esteemed incredible, as to venture their lives in defence of their testimony, is enough to convince any one of their sincerity, who is not an utter stranger to this virtue himself. Which makes me wonder that a late Author should urge it as an objection against our Saviour, ‘that many of his Disciples
 ‘thought he could not be the Messiah when
 ‘they saw him suffer, notwithstanding his
 ‘miracles, and frequent declarations to them
 ‘that he was the Messiah.’ Whereas, from this prejudice, and diffidence of the Disciples on the account of their Master’s sufferings, which were not very reconcileable with their idea of *Messiah the Conqueror*, it is natural to argue in a quite contrary way from this wretched Infidel, and to infer the truth of our Lord’s Resurrection; of which, if the Disciples had not had very good proof, having been so scandalized at his sufferings, notwithstanding the evidence of his miracles, they would never have declared themselves persuaded of it, when, by this declaration, and an endeavour to convert mankind to the same faith, they should draw such a storm upon themselves from all quarters.

3. Once they were timorous and poor spirited. As well as they loved their Master, they had not the courage to stand by him when he was apprehended; not even he who was naturally the most fearless and resolved of the number, and engaged to die with him, rather than he would deny him. They all fled when they saw him in the hands of his enemies, and as for him that promised most, he did worse than forsake him, he disowned all knowledge of him. Should it be suggested that there is *an inconsistency* in the character of this Apostle, who, in defiance of a multitude that came out against Jesus, bravely drew his sword in his quarrel, and yet presently after cowardly denies him; not to answer, that this start of courage might proceed from a sudden passion which his Master's danger had awakened in him, it is a sufficient reply, that when St. *Peter* thus exposed himself for his Master, he thought, or hoped, he would have exerted that divine power which he had so often seen to attend him, in delivering himself and followers, and confounding his enemies. But when, contrary to his expectation, Jesus quietly surrendered himself into the hands of those who sought his life, his resolution fails him at once; and, remembering what he had done to the high priest's

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servant, he is more afraid than any of his fellow-disciples.*

This shews that our Saviour knew very well what was in man, and particularly, in his Disciples, when he tells them, ^d *all ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is writen, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad.* Yet behold these very persons, as if they were not the same men, not long after acting a nobler part, and discovering quite another spirit! They are as fearless as before they were fearful, contemn dangers and death, as much as they before appeared to dread them! And when was it that they assumed this courage? At a time when one would have thought they should have been quite dispirited; and would have been so, if they had not been supported by a supernatural fortitude. It was after their

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Master

* The Traitor-Disciple seems to have acted upon the same view; persuading himself that Jesus would make his escape from those to whom he betrayed him, by which means he should gratify his covetousness at the small expence, as he thought, of a miracle wrought by his Master; for *when he saw that he was condemned; he repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sined in that I have betrayed innocent blood. And he went and hanged himself. Mat. xxvii. 3,—5.* Which at once takes off all suspicion of the Disciple knowing his Master not to be the man he passed for, in that he would not otherwise have been guilty of such a piece of horrid treachery.

^d Mat. xxvi. 21.

Master was taken from them that they made appear the greatest zeal and forwardness, and the most undaunted resolution in his cause. And how perfectly unaccountable would this have been, that whom they were afraid to own while he was yet living, and might have freed himself from the power of his persecutors, they should openly confess, when his enemies had glutted their rage upon him? This, I say, must be perfectly unaccountable upon any other supposition but that of his Resurrection. For indeed, if he conquered death, and thereby proved himself superior to the malice of men and devils, they had no cause to shun any hazards, and evils, how great soever, for his sake. He could save them from the mouth of the lion, and would do it, if he saw it necessary; or, at worst, would reward them with a glorious Resurrection. When we consider the Apostle *Peter*, who upon a slight accusation of a maid-servant saying, *This is one of them*, denied his Master; and when others repeated the same charge, proceeded so far as to bind his denial with oaths and curses; when we consider him, with the greatest presence of mind, addressing the *Jews* and charging them home with their guilt in crucifying the *Lord of glory*, what can we think but that this extraordinary courage had as extraordinary a cause; and was derived from his Saviour, who was once dead, but now risen,

° Acts ii. 23.

risen, never to die more? It was the Resurrection of Christ that gave them all this assurance, and made them triumph over the fears of death, as their Lord had done over death itself.

Before I leave this head, I would point out a remarkable place of scripture, which equally belongs to two or three of the particulars before mentioned. *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.* You have here some of the proofs of our Saviour's Resurrection, before insisted upon, briefly suggested; such as the boldness and courage of the witnesses in giving their testimony, which, considering their former character, was very observable—their discoursing in a manner that could be little expected from them, not having been bred to learning—and lastly, that they were competent witnesses of our Lord's Resurrection, having been among his intimate acquaintance; *and they took notice that they had been with Jesus;* they could not therefore be deceived, and take another person for Christ.

4. They were once led away with the vulgar prejudices of their nation, which expected a *temporal Messiah*, tho' meanly born; they were aspiring and ambitious, set upon worldly
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power and greatness, and dreamed of nothing but titles and places under their Master. ^s *There was a strife among them who should be greatest.* Two of them, another time, with their mother, sued for a grant from him that ^h *one might sit on his right hand, and the other on his left in his kingdom.* These false ideas with which their heads were filled, made them unwilling to hear of his sufferings, because they did not know how to make them agree with their notions of a worldly kingdom. Even after his Resurrection, they were not immediately delivered from these flattering and visionary hopes. So much seems to be implied in that question, ⁱ *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom unto Israel?* This being the state and posture of their minds, the change afterwards wrought in their temper and notions might justly occasion our wonder, did we not regard it as the operation of that *Divine Spirit*, which, after the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, was poured out upon them, whereby their minds were illuminated, their notions and their relish of things spiritualized, and they had a perfectly new set of ideas raised in them. Now, instead of earthly power, and riches, and grandeur, they recommend those of a very different nature, such as faith alone can apprehend, and such as suit none but a kingdom that is not of this world; they promise no other,

^s Luke xxii. 24. ^h Mat. xx. 22. ⁱ Acts i. 6.

other, they themselves covet no other; they are humbled and mortified, and make it their business to inculcate these virtues on others. There is nothing that relishes of pride and vain-glory, and the love of the world, in their preaching or in their lives; from whence we learn, that their sentiments of things were very much altered; as, upon enquiry into the reasons of this alteration, we shall be able to resolve it into nothing else but the Resurrection, and Exaltation of their Lord, which, together with the *Spirit* imparted to them, gave them another view of things, made them see their former mistakes, and qualified them to be the Disciples and Ministers of a crucified Jesus, and, by the ways of meekness and poverty of spirit, to prepare both themselves and others for future glory. We may add, as nearly connected with this particular,

5. That whereas before the death of Christ, and for some time after, the *Apostles* had much the same narrow partial conceptions of Almighty God, as the God of the Jews only, and not of the Gentiles, which others of that nation had; by degrees, their minds and hearts are so enlarged, that they are willing all men should be admitted upon the same foot of acceptance in the sight of God with themselves. They are taught no longer to call those persons *common* or *unclean*, whom God had *cleansed*, as he had done the for-

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biden kinds of food, by taking off his prohibition from them ; and confess, that they now perceive, ^k *God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him.* Yea, they ^l *glorify God who had to the Gentiles also granted repentance unto life.*

The Gospel they preached abounds with precepts of the most sublime and extensive charity, a charity of which they themselves were most admirable examples, aiming at the salvation of all mankind, and shunning no dangers, grudging no pains and labour, by which they might bring them to love God, their Saviour, and one another. Now, whatever they may think who are strangers to the history and character of the *Jews*, such a revolution as this in the sentiments of men, possessed from their birth with high ideas of their being the favourites of heaven, and sowered with the ill usage they had met with from their conquerors, will appear not a little surprizing to all proper judges of it. When we see them quitting the higher ground, or rather, without quitting it, lending others their helping hand to raise them as high as themselves, and making their veneration for *Moses* stoop to their regard for a Person who was lately put to death in the most infamous manner ; and when we consider that this change happened after the death of Christ, who in
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^k Acts x. 15,—34.

^l xi. 18.

the course of his ministry had given frequent hints of a new covenant or religion which God was about to establish, in the blessings and privileges of which all that believed in his name would be equally interested; and had told them, ^m *he had many things to say to them, which they could not then bear*; whose want of zeal for ceremonial institutions, and the peculiar customs of that nation, which he set no value upon in comparison of *moral duties*, was, they likewise knew, one principal article of the crimes laid to his charge by his enemies, on which they condemned him to death; when we put these things together, no other account will be thought so probable, of the change mentioned, as that given us by themselves, *viz.* that *God having raised up Jesus, and in his name sent the gift of the Holy Ghost upon the Gentiles as well as on the Jews*, they would not *withstand God*, who, by this sign, had plainly declared his good-will towards all the children of men. For this consult the *History of the Acts of the Apostles*, particularly in the *Chapters* before cited.—Upon the whole then, this comparison of the witnesses of Christ's Resurrection with themselves does very much strengthen their testimony, since we find such differences in the same men, as can no otherwise be accounted

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^m John xvi. 12.

ed for than by supposing the truth of what they affirmed.

v. The descent of the *Holy Ghost* at *Pentecost*, is a further proof of the Resurrection of Jesus. This he himself before his Death had frequently encouraged them to expect; see particularly, *John xv. 26.* *When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father he shall testify of me. And ye also shall be my witnesses, because ye have been with me from the beginning.* And so, after his Resurrection, *Acts i. 8.* *Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth.* Here is then a double testimony to be considered; one of the *Holy Ghost*, the other of the *Apostles*; and one designed to support, and corroborate the other; the *Holy Ghost* testifying of Christ by those extraordinary gifts bestowed on the first Preachers of Christianity, whereby the *Apostles* and their fellow-labourers in the Gospel were assisted in a most effectual manner to witness to their Saviour with whom they had been from the beginning of his ministry. This effusion of the *Spirit* was not till after Christ's Ascension, but at once gives evidence to that, and to his Resurrection too; ⁿ *This Jesus hath*

hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses; and 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 bear. And so again, ° The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour; for to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so also is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

Here you see the testimony of the Spirit is represented as conspiring with that of the Apostles to the Resurrection of Jesus. The effect of this effusion of the Spirit was, that the persons on whom it fell were endowed with several miraculous gifts, among which was the gift of languages; and the Apostles not barely with a more eminent degree of these gifts than other christians, but with a power of communicating them by the laying on of their hands. Acts viii. 18. The gift of languages was not only a miracle, but a most useful miracle; being intended to fit the Apostles to preach the Gospel to all mankind, for whose benefit it was equally designed: from whence by the way we learn, both the extensive nature and design of the Christian Religion; and the

• Acts v. 30,—32.

the *end* of Spiritual Gifts, that they are for use, and not for ostentation. It is only as a miracle that we now consider it; and a most evident miracle it was, undisputed by those who were then present, when the event came to pass, and were the best judges. And if it be asked, how we shall be sure that the matter of fact was as it is here related? The answer is easy, that had it not been a thing well known, and at that time, and in that place, not doubted of, the writer of this history would not have fixed the time and place as he hath done; at *Jerusalem* the chief city of the *Jews*, and at *the feast of Pentecost*, when vast numbers of *Jews* came up out of the neighbouring countries to worship at the temple; and further, at that *particular* festival which next ensued after the death of Christ; a fact so ascertained might have been easily disproved, if the relation had been false. It is true when the *Apostles* were dispersed into distant countries, where they propagated the Christian Faith, their speaking in the *language* of the country where they sojourned was not, to men who were strangers to their persons, any argument of the truth of the facts they related, and the doctrines they taught, (because they could not be assured of their not having learned these *languages* in the ordinary way) without first receiving a well attested account of what had lately past at
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Jerusalem. Nor could their character; where they were not personally known, nor their number, or their exact uniformity and constancy in delivering the facts and doctrines of Christianity, presently gain them any credit; because these things could not be immediately known to those who were acquainted only with a single Apostle, by whose ministry they were converted; of whom, and his doctrine, they could therefore no otherwise make a judgment, but from the things which they themselves saw and heard. This made it necessary that they should produce some other extraordinary proof; which accordingly they did, performing many wonderful works, and conferring divers miraculous gifts on the Churches which they had planted in Cities of the greatest note. Besides the satisfaction which these gifts afforded to the persons immediately concerned, they are a very good argument to us at this distance, who in the Epistles written to those Churches, find these gifts of the Holy Ghost appealed, or referred to, as very common things, and universally acknowledged; which we must therefore grant them to have been, unless we can suppose the Writers of these Epistles to have been the most shameful and abandoned of men, to talk of things as well-known to persons who knew nothing of them; and withal the most indiscreet

and unthinking, to put their own reputation and that of their cause on a great number of men's allowing that to be true, which they knew to be false; especially when there were those who made it their business to undermine the Apostles authority among the persons appealed to; as was the case, in the Churches of *Corinth* and *Galatia*, with regard to the Apostle *Paul*.

VI. The consequence, or success of their testimony is to be considered, both that which they might *probably* have expected, in case they had been false witnesses, and that which *actually* followed. The most probable consequence, and that which they had all the reason in the world to expect, if it had been a falsity that they reported, was that they should find no manner of credit. The actual consequence was the conversion of the world to the Christian Faith; which as they would not have had the least reason to hope for, had not the Resurrection of Christ been an undoubted matter of fact, so it does undeniably prove the fact of our Lord's Resurrection.

I. The most probable consequence of the testimony of the Apostles, and that which they had all the reason in the world to expect, if it had been a falsity that they reported, was that they should find no manner of credit; or whatever success they might have for a little time, among a few weak

weak people, and such as were fond of novelties, the forgery would soon be detected, their followers fall off from them, and they and their cause be thenceforward mentioned only with contempt. This was the best they could look for, barely to be despised and neglected. It was not likely they should escape without much worse treatment, when they had to do with such an implacable sort of men as the Jews were, and preached in the hated name of a Person whom they had crucified. They might be sure that if let alone at first out of contempt, as soon as they should have gathered any thing of a number, and their sect should threaten to prevail, they should be persecuted with the most unrelenting rage, and quickly be destroyed. They could not but be acquainted with the fate of *Theudas* and *Judas of Galilee*, of whom we read, *Acts* v. 36, 37. *Before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody, to whom a great number of men, about four hundred joined themselves, who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered and brought to nought. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him; he also perished, and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.* The Apostles could not be ignorant of this, since *St. Luke*, who wrote the history in which this affair is mentioned, was one of their particular

friends. And as they must know the unhappy end of these impostors, so it must be great folly in them to flatter themselves that they should have any other; and much greater if, expecting no better, they would yet engage in so hopeless an enterprize,

They could not have the same temptation to try their fortune that those other counterfeits had, inasmuch as they set up for themselves, the Apostles for another man; they declared for a temporal power, or, at least, for liberty, and so might hope for a favourable reception among those who were weary of the *Roman* yoke, and big with the expectation of a triumphant Messiah. The Apostles had no prospect of obtaining a welcome, either among Jews or Gentiles for the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, which was that they proposed to the world. Should it be said, that upon this very account they were less likely to incur the displeasure of the *Romans*, who would not trouble themselves about a dead man, and an invisible King, (for what danger could there be to the government, if his followers thought Jesus a King, since he was removed far enough out of the way?) I answer, that at least the malice of their own countrymen would be the greater against them, were it for nothing else than that the fame of this *false* Messiah, as they esteemed him, would help to divert the expectation of the
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true; and that out of hatred to the christian cause, they would not fail to represent the followers as they had done their Master before them, as enemies to *Cæsar*; restless and unsatisfied till they had accomplished their destruction, as they had done his. Besides, that the *Romans* were too jealous, both of their established government, and their established religion, not to look with an evil eye upon any growing sect, and to take timely care to suppress it: not to add, that though he whom they called their King was not living, yet they were, and under pretence of drawing men in to advance his spiritual kingdom, might stir them up to do a great deal of mischief. When their views were thus unpromising, they must have wanted common understanding to attempt the spreading a false story, which they must foresee would be but short-lived.

2. Having considered the probable consequence of this testimony, if it had been false, let us now enquire what was actually the consequence of it; *viz.* the conversion of the world, of men of all religions, of all ranks and denominations, learned and unlearned, to the Christian Faith; an effect not only extremely improbable, had Christianity been founded in a lye, but morally impossible. *Gamaliel's* advice and reasoning was very just; ^p *And now I say unto you, refrain*

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from these men, and let them alone; for 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. And very certain it is, that such a sect would soon have dwindled to nothing, as circumstances then were, without truth to support it, and a heavenly protection to guard and defend it. *Daniel*, in his prophecy, describing the kingdom of the *Messiah*, gives the characters of it, and the time when it should commence; ⁹ *And in the days of those kings, (i. e. after the Babylonian, and the Medo-Persian monarchies were destroyed; and the Grecian was split into several lesser principalities, signified by the toes in Nebuchadnezzar's image) shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, (which he did under the fourth and last, or Roman monarchy) and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all those kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.* In which words it appears that this *kingdom of God*, or of *heaven* (as the gospel-state is often called) was to be known by two properties, its *universality*, and its *everlasting duration*. And accordingly within a few years after our Lord's Resurrection, it grew to be of a very great extent; as we believe, when the fulness of time pointed out by prophecies is come, it shall

⁹ Dan. ii. 44.

shall be properly universal, and *the stone cut out of the mountain without hands* shall overthrow all adverse religions and interests, and fill the whole earth.

The progress of Christianity was amazing. Converts came flying from all parts, ^r *as a cloud, and as doves to their windows*; which may help us to understand what is meant when it is said, that ^r *with great power the Apostles gave witness of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. The meaning is, that their preaching was attended with wonderful success; the religion of Christ spread its conquests on all sides; which it could not have done, if, besides the power of truth, an invisible hand from heaven had not effectually wrought with it. A single Sermon of St. Peter's was the means of converting three thousand souls, and another two thousand. Within twenty-five years after the death of Christ, the number of believing Jews, at Jerusalem only, amounted to many myriads, and these too, such as were *zealous of the Law*, and so had no small difficulties to overcome before they could turn christians^t. Some of our Saviour's Parables alluded to this surprising success of the Gospel; particularly the Parable of the grain of mustard-seed; ^u *The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and*

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sowed

^r Isai. lx. 8.^t Acts xxi. 20.^r Acts iv. 33.^u Mat. xiii. 31, 32.

sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree; so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Thus did Christ fulfil his promise, that ^w when lifted up, he would draw all men after him.

And what was the time employed in making these conquests? The rapidity or swiftness of them is almost incredible, and therefore very fitly compared to lightning; ^x *As the lightening that lightneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth to the other part under heaven, so shall also the son of man be in his day.* Before the destruction of Jerusalem, which was less than forty years from the crucifixion of our Saviour, the Gospel was to be published ^y among all nations; and was so among the nations or countries subject to the Roman Empire. Some of the earliest Fathers of the Church enumerate several people and countries in *Asia*, *Africa*, and *Europe*, the only quarters of the world then known, among whom the Gospel was received, some of them exceeding remote from Jerusalem, from whence it first set out, and unconquered by the Romans. Such was the reception which the report of Christ's Resurrection met with in the world; an event so astonishing, if we consider

^w John xii. 31

^x Mark xiii. 26

^y Luke xvii. 24.

consider a few of its circumstances, as to prove, beyond all contradiction, the truth of our Saviour's Resurrection, and the divinity of his Religion. I shall briefly instance in some.

1. The opposition which the Gospel encountered and overcame. All parties were confederated against it, though upon different motives. Their common quarrel was its declaring war against all other religions, with which it did not allow of any agreement or composition. *Judaism* itself, the only true religion before, was to be abolished, and yield to the Gospel as a more perfect dispensation. And as for the idolatrous religions of the world, it gave them no quarter. They were not indeed to be destroyed by force, as the abominations of the *Canaanites* were. The Apostles and first christians were not to take the same method the *Israelites* did, who are commanded at their entrance into *Canaan*, to destroy where-ever they came ² *the altars of the false gods, to break their images, and to cut down their groves.* But the false gods were not to be admitted into a partnership with the true, nor the true God to be worshiped by images; both the gods and their images, with all the idle and impious ceremonies belonging to their worship, were to be discarded by all that embraced Christianity; these being
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² Exod. xxxiv. 13.

the only terms on which they could be listed in the number of Christ's Disciples.

The princes and politicians of the world would be sure to oppose this new Religion from maxims of state, and because of the dangerous consequence of innovations in these matters. Hence all nations, *Greeks, Romans*, and even the most barbarous people, have by publick Laws made it a very high crime to affront and undermine the Religion of the country. Concerning the *Athenians* and the *Romans* it is observed, * that care was taken by them to prevent any one's introducing a new Religion. Therefore *Socrates* was condemned at *Athens*, and the *Chaldeans* and *Jews* were expelled the city of *Rome*. Such was the zeal of the *Athenians* in this respect, (as *Josephus* relates it) that they who uttered a word concerning the gods, not agreeable to the received laws, were to be punished without any mercy. The *Romans* used a like severity, and *Mecænas's* advice to *Augustus* upon this head is remarkable, being to this sense, " that he should himself worship the
 " gods according to the laws of the coun-
 " try, and oblige others to do the same ;
 " that he should punish the authors of
 " foreign religions, and this not only for
 " the sake of the gods, whom whoever
 " contemns, he will hardly be restrained by
 " any

* *Witsii Ægyptiac.*

“ any thing else ; but because they who introduce new deities will draw away great numbers to the use of foreign laws ; from whence conspiracies, assemblies, and cabals will follow, things not at all consistent with the honour and safety of a monarchy.” Upon these and such like reasons of policy, idolatrous princes had no kindness for a Religion which threatened the overthrow of all those that were established, and expressly aimed at their destruction ; which was the main root of all those cruel persecutions raised against the Christian Church, under heathen Emperors.

The *Priests* would not be so ungrateful as to desert the gods, at whose altars they had served, and been fed, and to whom they were indebted for their unmeasurable wealth, and great authority among the people. And the *People*, besides the influence of their Princes and Priests upon them, were held fast by superstition, and a blind veneration for ancient customs, from which, they had been made to believe, they could not depart without the greatest impiety towards heaven, and arraigning the wisdom of their Parents and Ancestors. And though the philosophical and more thinking part of the world secretly despised the established superstitions, yet they too joined in running down Christianity upon another score, having no relish for its doctrines, which did
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not at all agree with their preconceived notions, and high thoughts of themselves; nor for its simple and unartificial manner of instruction, without making use of any studied methods, any formal rules, and long trains of reasoning, or any embellishments of rhetorick and eloquence. So that the *power* and the *wisdom* of the world, the various *passions* and *interests* of men, persons of every *condition* and *size of understanding*, were all united against the Gospel; which yet baffled all this opposition, and proved victorious over the joint force of earth and hell; the reason of which could be no other than this, that *heaven* was on its side, and in fighting against Christianity, men fought against God.

2. What were the means employed in propagating Christianity? The most unlikely to human apprehension that can be conceived. They were not *wise men after the flesh*, or *mighty*, or *noble* that were called to preach the Gospel of Christ, and to be witnesses of his Resurrection. But God was pleased to chuse *the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, the weak things of the world to confound the things that were mighty; base things of the world, and things that were despised, did God chuse; yea, and things that were not, to bring to nought things that were; that it might appear that the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness*

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ness of God stronger than men. The instruments were contemptible, but the power that wielded them was omnipotent, and the wisdom divine. Men of no extraction, no education, no fame for parts and learning, no power, no interest, no sway, unskilled in the arts of persuasion, unarmed with force or policy, these were the men singled out for this work. They were sent as sheep among wolves. Naked and defenseless, (or furnished with no other weapon but truth, and no other armour but that of innocence) they entered the list against the whole world; yea, and against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places; and in the issue appeared to be more than a match for them, to the end, *the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of men.* But there is another hindrance behind. * They were not only *mean men*, but they were *Jews*, of a nation at once despised and hated by other people, and for setting up a Religion that subverted the Religion of their fathers more hated by their fellow *Jews* than they were by neighbouring nations. To this add,

3. The consideration of the Religion propagated by them, and the fact on which they founded it. The fact was of one Jesus, who was dead, but by the Apostles affirmed to be alive again; a story so little fitted

* Bishop Chandler in his first *Defence*.

fited to gain belief, that when St. Paul discoursed concerning it at *Athens*, the *Epicureans* and the *Stoicks* encountered him, asking, ^a*What will this babler say?* While to others he seemed to be a setter forth of strange Gods, because he preached unto them *Jesus and the Resurrection*. The Religion founded upon this strange fact consisted of doctrines and precepts no way suited to the gust of the world; such as these, that salvation is to be obtained no other way than by the righteousness of a humble suffering crucified Jesus; that there is but One God, and he a pure Spirit; that the only acceptable way of worshipping this holy and invisible God is by a pure heart, and spiritual and elevated affections; that to please God we must deny ourselves, crucify the flesh, oppose the torrent of worldly custom and example, forgive our enemies, and practise the most divine and difficult virtues; that for all this men were to have no other reward in this world but the testimony of their own consciences, joined with that of the Spirit of God; and, in the next, none but such a one as the sensual, the covetous, the earthly-minded would be ready to account rather a punishment than a reward. This was the Religion, to the doctrines and rules of which the Apostles of Christ required an absolute submission; a Religion that

• Acts xvii. 18.

that demanded a great deal, and for the present promised nothing; which notwithstanding, their testimony was believed, their offers were accepted, and their injunctions complied with by great multitudes. Once more,

4. The Time and Place, when and where these things were transacted compleat the argument. It was upon the very spot which had been the scene of our Saviour's miracles and sufferings, among those who wanted not *will* to have detected the cheat, if there had been any, nor *ability* neither; when it was but so little while before, that the things in question were reported to have happened. It was further in a very knowing age and part of the world that Christianity was first preached and first established. The first converts to the Gospel were not made among Barbarians, among rude and ignorant people, who were capable of being caught by the grossest impostures, but where the arts and sciences had their abode, and in *Rome* itself, the center of human learning, among wise and inquisitive persons, who would not easily swallow a palpable falsehood. It was at the very time that the heathen Oracles lost their credit, and fell into general neglect. Now whether it be supposed that these Oracles were given out by lyeing Spirits who were silenced at this time; or by the craft of the Priests, who,

who, now the world was grown wiser; could find no vent for those pious frauds which past well enough in the times of ignorance; whether one or the other of these be supposed, the cessation of Oracles renders the success of the Gospel at the same time and in the same places, much more remarkable.

I might shew the great disparity in all these respects between *Christianity* and the *Mahometan Imposture*, which was first set on foot in an age of darkness, and among a most ignorant sort of people; was propagated by the sword, † and in its scheme of doctrines was accommodated to the carnal lusts and fancies of men. But contenting myself to have just mentioned this, I pass on to the Use which may be made of this important truth. And there are several Reflexions which do naturally arise from it, for Information, Comfort, and Instruction in holiness.—But of this in another Discourse.

† *Abu-Obeidab*, was patient, meek and religious, saith the Historian; *Galed* courageous and enterprising; and it was for this reason that the former was displaced from his command over the forces that were to plant the religion of *Mahomet* in *Syria*, to make room for the latter. *Ockley's* history of the *Saracens*. Had Mahometism had no other champions than men of *Abu-Obeidab's* character, well meaning, but not warlike, that absurd religion would have been extinguished as soon as it appeared.



S E R M O N X I I .

On the Resurrection of J E S U S .

L U K E X X I V . 34 .

The Lord is risen indeed.

TH E S E words I have observed may be formed into this Proposition.

It is a certain truth, and capable of the most satisfactory proof, that Jesus, our Lord, is risen from the dead.

In the management of this subject I proposed,

I. To lay down a few preliminary Observations.

i. The Resurrection of our blessed Saviour is a fundamental doctrine of Christianity.

ii. The doctrine of Christ's Resurrection might have stood firm, though it had not

been supported, as it now is, by the testimony of eye-witnesses.

III. The goodness of God is to be thankfully observed and acknowledged, in giving the world such abundant evidence for the truth of this momentous article ; being not barely sufficient to convince all unprejudiced persons, but more than enough to this end.

IV. The nature of the thing attested is not such as to render the testimony concerning it incredible.

Having laid down these preliminary Observations, I passed on,

·II. To the direct proof of our Lord's Resurrection.

I. The truth of this memorable fact may be presumed from the *number* of the witnesses.

II. If we consider their *character*, it will be found to add mighty weight to their testimony.

III. It is a great accession to the strength of this argument, that they were so *steady* and *unshaken* in their testimony.

IV. If we compare the witnesses *before* with themselves *after*, the time they affirmed Christ to be risen, and we shall be convinced by the remarkable change in their notions,

tions, and temper, and conduct, that their Lord was risen from the dead as they said.

v. The descent of the *Holy Ghost* at *Pentecost* is a further proof of the Resurrection of Jesus.

vi. The consequence or success of their testimony is to be considered ; both that which they might *probably* have expected, in case they had been false witnesses, and that which *actually* followed.

Having in the two preceding Discourses considered these things, I now come to the *Use* which may be made of this important truth. And there are several Reflections which do naturally arise from it, for Information, Comfort and Instruction.

1. Is it a most certain truth, *that Christ is risen from the dead?* And is the proof now given of it satisfactory, as I persuade myself it is? We know then what we are to judge of Christ, and his Gospel. We know that our Religion is divine, and the Author of it from God, and with God. We may be confident that we have not followed *cunningly devised fables* in believing the truth of that Religion which we have been brought up in, and of the several doctrines that constitute the frame of it. We may be sure that these are not fables, because the Resurrection of Christ, upon which his Religion depends, is no fable. The two last of the arguments made use of, prove the truth of the Christian Religion immediately ;

the rest do more immediately prove the Resurrection of Christ, and as a necessary consequence of that, the divine authority of his doctrine. For surely God would not have honoured an impostor, and added credit to his wicked designs, so far as to raise him from the dead. And therefore, as St. Paul argues, ^a *He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the Resurrection from the dead.* And if he himself was the Son of God, his Gospel is to be received not as the Word of men, but as the Word of God. A true Prophet could never teach a false doctrine; he that was proclaimed *the beloved Son of God, in whom he is well pleased*, and to whom we are commanded to hearken, could never deliver any other things than what he had received of the Father. Let us therefore hear and reverence him as a Divine Teacher, and Law-giver. Christianity is the true Religion; we know it to be so, because Christ, the Author of it, and from whom it hath its name, is risen from the dead. Let us entertain, and treat it as true; which we shall never do, unless we make it the constant rule of our Faith and Practice. By asking, in a doubting sceptical manner—*how can these things be*—when they are plainly a part of the Gospel Revelation; or by a carnal temper, and a wicked ungodly course of life, we pro-

^a Rom. i. 4.

proclaim our Religion to be false, or act as if it were so; let us be persuaded to be more consistent with ourselves, and with the Religion we profess, and *carry the name of Christ written, as it were, on our foreheads.* A christian life, as it is an open declaration of our faith, is most likely to establish others in the same, while by a verbal acknowledgment of the truth, and feigned zeal for it, unattended with a suitable conversation, we shall be so far from serving the interest of truth, as to do it a great deal of prejudice.

II. *Is Christ risen indeed?* Then is the offence of the cross ceased. I mean all reasonable offence against it. No man can have any just cause to be offended with Christ, at the meanness and poverty of his life, or even the ignominious circumstances of his Death. These things are shocking to the first thoughts and reflections of our minds, that one who takes the name of the *Saviour of the world*, should be delivered unto Death, and suffer in the quality of a malefactor. But, if the whole scene be considered under one view, there is nothing in it to displease; the ill impressions made by the Death of Christ on the beholder, are all taken off by his Resurrection; nay, and the Death of Christ hath a quite contrary effect, and challenges our love and esteem as much as, separate from his Resurrection, it would have been apt to provoke our disgust. *Christ crucified, was*

to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. But let us examine a little whether they had any foundation for their prejudices; or any but what his Resurrection ought to have entirely removed. Was Jesus crucified through weakness? Say, he was so; yet he liveth by the power of God. Was he delivered into the hands of wicked men? Arraigned, condemned, and put to death as a blasphemer of the law, and a deceiver of the people? Whom men condemned, God justified, by raising him from the dead. Was he that promised immortality conquered by Death? It is owned he was; but in his turn he was conqueror, and loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible he should be holden of it; he made his grave with the wicked, but left it as the Son of God. Did he set like the sun under an eclipse? He rose like the sun in its full glory. His Death could not diminish him more than his Resurrection aggrandized and exalted him. Behold *Daniel* a servant of the living God, (as if his God was not able to save him from being made a sacrifice by the worshipers of idols) cast into the lions den; and a stone laid upon the mouth of the den, sealed with the king's own signet, and with the signet of his lords! But stay a little; censure not *Daniel* as wanting true piety; or his God as wanting power or goodness. Behold him coming out of the den unhurt by the lions, whose mouth the
angel

angel of God had shut, forasmuch as innocency was found before him in this holy man. This is a very proper illustration of the Resurrection of our great Redeemer, whose enemies, to make his sepulchre sure, sealed the stone that was rolled to the door of it, and set a watch; but all in vain. As if he had recovered new strength by his sleep in the dust, he emerges from the grave with redoubled vigour, and becomes immortal. If therefore, the cross of Christ be *foolishness* to any, it may be to such as are not themselves very *wise*.

III. *Is Christ risen indeed?* We may then infer the *compleatness* of the Satisfaction made by his Death; that he was not only an *innocent* Person, but a *sacrifice of a sweet smell, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world*. His Death was not of a *martyr* only, like that of other good men, who die for their Religion; he died as a *publick victim*, and gave *his life a ransom for many*; so he himself foretold he would; and by rising, as he likewise foretold, made it visible to the whole world that the ransom was accepted. It is for this reason, that the Apostle, having asked, *who is he that condemneth?* And answered in part, *it is Christ that died*, adds further, *yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God making intercession for us*. Had his life been taken from him as from the sacrifices under the law,

and never restored to him again, it had been an argument that his blood was no more capable of taking away sin, than the blood of bulls and of goats; his sacrifice had been as imperfect as any of the legal sacrifices, or rather his Death had been no sacrifice at all: but now the acceptableness of his Sufferings, the merit of his Death, the all-sufficiency of his Mediation can no longer be doubted of; God publicly declares all this, by raising him from the dead.

It seems to be on this account that the Resurrection of our blessed Saviour, which is sometimes attributed to himself, (to denote the greatness of his power, and that he hath *life in himself*; John ii. 19. *Destroy this temple, meaning the temple of his body, and in three days I will raise it up again*) is at other times, and most generally, spoken of as the effect of the will and power of God his Father; ^b *Him hath God raised up.* ^c *Whom God hath raised up from the dead.* ^d *Christ was raised from the dead by the glory* (i. e. by the power or spirit) *of the Father*; to signify that the justice of God was fully satisfied, and the honour of his broken law vindicated, that he approved the obedience of his Death, and was now reconciled to an apostate world, not imputing their iniquities to any that repent and believe. So that here you see the ground of our justification by

^b Acts ii. 24. ^c iii. 15. ^d Rom. vi. 4.

by Christ; ^c *He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.* ^f *We are justified by his blood,* because he was justified by his Resurrection; to which I conceive that expression of his, being ^g *justified in the spirit,* refers. And I am the more confirmed in that sense of the phrase, by comparing it with what is said, *Rom. i. 4. that he was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the Resurrection from the dead.* In this view how reviving is the meditation of Christ's Resurrection to believing humble souls! If I belong to Christ, if united to him by faith and love, if conformed to his image, if obedient to his laws; I am absolved in him, his discharge is mine, and I am as certain of my being pardoned, as I am that Christ is risen.

IV. *Is Christ risen indeed?* Then he is indeed ascended up into heaven, is sat down at the right hand of God, there to make intercession for us, and to exercise universal empire, and dominion, and from thence he will come to judge both the quick and the dead. All these things are necessarily connected with his Resurrection. He did not rise to live here upon earth; the earth was to be only the scene of his humiliation, which was finished at his Death. We may truly say, that the world, having treated him so ungratefully, was not *worthy of him*; besides which, it was not

^c Rom. iv. 25. ^f v. 9. ^g 1 Tim. iii. 16.

not fit or reasonable that he should be any longer detained from his reward. For which reason, after he had spent a little time with his Disciples, by his presence and conversation, to prepare and animate them for their undertaking, and given them some instructions concerning the kingdom of God, he returns to his Father, and is invested with that glory *which he had with him before the world was*. His entrance into heaven was both as a Conqueror, and a Priest. In his passage through the interjacent regions *he led captivity captive*, and openly made a shew of those principalities and powers whom he had spoiled on the cross. He overcame Death, and him that had the power of Death, and having vanquished them by his Death and Resurrection, led them, as it were, in triumph at his Ascension.

It was further, as our *High-Priest*, that he made his entrance into the ^h *holy place*; that as the High-Priest, once a year, went into the holy of holies, with the names of the children of *Israel*, and the blood of the sacrifice, which he sprinkled on the mercy-seat, so our Jesus might *appear in the presence of God for us*, as our *advocate*, obtaining the forgiveness of our sins in his blood; as our *mediator*, offering up our prayers as incense before the throne; and as our *fore-runner*, preparing mansions of glory for us.

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^h Heb. iv. 14.

We are further to consider our Redeemer as possessed of universal empire and dominion. He is therefore said to be *the first born from the dead*, and to be *begotten* on the day that he was raised, according to the prophecy in the *second Psalm*, compared with *Heb. i. 5*. Then was the decree declared, or published, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee; ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession*. Then he was solemnly invested with the *regalia*, and took the reins of government; the *Angels* were commanded to *worship him* as their Lord, and all power was put into his hands, both *in heaven*, his imperial city, where he reigns with the *Father*, and *on earth*, the affairs of which he directs for the advantage and happiness of *his body the church*. Christ was *first* born in a poor and low condition, and to a life of sorrow and suffering; his *second* birth was to honour, and immortality, and a kingdom that ruleth over all; and, in respect of both these, his *first* and *second* birth, he is in scripture styled *the Son of God*. It is true, when he was born in *Bethlehem of Judca*, *wise men came from the east to Jerusalem, saying, where is he that is born King of the Jews?* But though the title did belong to him then, it is certain he took not possession of the kingdom, or not in so eminent a manner as after his Resurrection, when he

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became *King of Nations*, as well as *King of the Jews*, and of Angels, as well as of Men.

The *natales*, or birth-days, of the *Roman Emperors* signified not only their *natural* birth-days, but likewise their *civil*, or the time of their inauguration to the empire; this was called *natalis imperii*, in distinction from the other, which was called *natalis genuinus*. When *Constantine* is said by ancient writers to have been born in *Britain*, there are learned men who understand this of his imperial, not of his natural birth-day; his natural birth, as they prove, being at *Naisus* in *Dacia*. The day of our Saviour's Resurrection was *natalis imperii*, on which he received his investiture into that sovereignty, which he merited by his Sufferings and Death. *Phil. ii. 6,—11.* There is a double *Lordship* of Christ, one of *authority*, like that of kings over their subjects; the other of *property*, like that which men have in things which they have bought, or do any other way rightfully possess: both these are referred to, *Rom. xiv. 7, 8, 9.* *None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether therefore we live or die, we are the Lord's: for to this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.* We are to own the *authority* of Christ by living
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to him, by making his laws the rule of our actions, and in all things preferring his will to our own. We are to own his absolute *right* and *propriety* in us, by submitting to his disposal, both in life and in death, by living to his *glory*, and dying at his *call*, and if need be, for his *name*; for *we are not our own, but his, who died for us, and rose again*. It is the privilege of the faithful, and so esteemed by them, that Christ is their Lord in both these respects. They cannot be governed by a better system of laws than those of the Redeemer, nor have their lives and all their interests lodged in better hands. Of all committed to him by the Father, and who commit themselves to him, none shall be lost; he will watch over them with the tenderest care, protect them from the rage of their enemies, order their circumstances, both spiritual and temporal, for their good, and finally receive them to himself, because they are his.

I am aware, this sort of kingly power will not at all please some men, who are as much offended with the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, as with his Cross. In the eyes of the *Jews*, all dominion, or deliverance, that is not temporal, appears trifling and despicable; there is nothing substantial, or real in it. And there is a certain Author, who, to judge of him by his manner of writing,

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is neither *Heathen*, *Jew*, nor *Christian*, and yet every one of them as serves his occasion, that talks after the same manner. As if the supreme command over the visible and invisible worlds, because not *visibly* administered, did not express something more grand, than to be the deliverer of a handful of people, and the instrument of their ambition and revenge. But if nothing but a *visible* glory will strike these men; if no salvation must pass for real, that is not *sensible*; and the destruction of enemies be such a necessary and desirable mark of power, let them wait a while longer, and they shall have the satisfaction they demand, if they will so account it.

For as surely as Christ is risen (and nothing can well be more sure than this) we know, that ^k *he will come to judge the world in righteousness, whereof God hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* Then shall we see that our Redeemer liveth, whom we now believe to be risen on the testimony of his Disciples; our eyes shall behold him, and not another's. But a few were eye-witnesses of his Resurrection; when he cometh *in the clouds of heaven, every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, or have ungratefully denied, and spitefully insulted him.* Glorious, and terrible advent! Long wished for
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^k Acts xvii. 31.

by some; by others as much dreaded, or derided! See, he comes! The *grave* could detain him no longer than three days; and the *heavens* can do it only till the *restitution* or consummation of all things, spoken by the *holy Prophets*, since the world began; he comes to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not his gospel, and to be glorified in his saints. They who will not hear the Apostles, proving that Christ is risen, and sealing the truth with their blood; they that laugh at the followers of Jesus for their credulity, and, like the *philosophical wits* of Athens, mock when they are told of his Resurrection; what will these men say, which way be able to look, when he whom they have treated as an impostor, shall appear with a pomp and retinue, becoming the Son of God, and the Judge of the world? Will they not be alike unable to avoid believing then, as to justify their *unbelief* now? Then shall the ¹*unbelieving have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone*. This will be their proper part and portion.

Ah, why will not men be satisfied with the evidence which God is pleased to afford them, when this evidence is more than sufficient to convince the humble and impartial? Why, let me add, will not those who profess to believe that God hath appointed a day when he will judge the world by his

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¹ Rev. xxi. 8.

Son, whom he raised from dead, take more care to preserve an agreement between their belief and their practice? Are we to be judged? And to be judged by Jesus Christ? Have we (setting aside the arguments from natural Reason) the same assurance of a Judgment to come, as of the Resurrection of Christ, which is past? How is it then we are no more solicitous to provide for this Judgment? That we live so little like persons who know they shall be judged? Is it because the Redeemer of the world is to be the Judge of it? But consider, if Christ be the Judge, his Gospel is to be the Rule of Judgment. And whatever foolish hopes the wicked and impenitent may derive from their false notions of the *Person* of Christ, they are all destroyed by his *Gospel*, which affords not the least shadow of hope to any but the sincerely penitent, who *deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for, and basing to the coming of the day of Christ.*

v. Christ being risen, I infer there will be a Resurrection of the dead. This inference is so certain, that St. Paul, writing to the *Corinthians*, among whom there seemed to be some who denied this doctrine, scruples not to say, that ^m *if there be no Resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen.* The Resurrection of mankind in general, but
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^m 1 Cor. xv. 13.

especially of true believers, may be argued from the Resurrection of Christ.

1. Christ being risen, there will be a Resurrection of mankind universally, without the exception of any. For *since by man came death, by man came also the Resurrection from the dead; and as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.* Which reasoning holds in a lower degree of all the posterity of *Adam*, it being evident beyond all dispute that men die because subjected to death by *Adam's* sin; not this or that part of mankind only, but all, even those that never sined after the similitude of *Adam's* transgression; *Infants* who never sined actually; and *Heathens* who never sined against a positive or revealed law, a law threatening death to the transgressor. Now when there is this parallel drawn betwixt *Adam* and *Christ*, and the death, which is the effect of *Adam's* sin, is owned to be universal, how can we justly restrain the Resurrection which comes by *Christ*? You see the Apostle in the place just cited from his First Epistle to the *Corinthians*, makes use of the most general terms; as he likewise doth in his Epistle to the *Romans*. ° *As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification of life.*

But shall all men be justified? Yes, in this sense, that so far as the sin of the first man

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° 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.

° Rom. v. 18.

imputed to his posterity unto death, or to the bringing them under the law of mortality, they shall be freed from this sin by a Resurrection, here called *justification of life*. So that I cannot imagine what good reason any can have to make it a question, *whether the Resurrection of all, good and bad, be owing to Christ as Mediator*; or to start any such inquiry, as *whether there would have been no Resurrection, if Christ had not undertook to restore us*. As to the first, the scripture is clear that good and bad equally shall be raised by the power of Christ. ^p *The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, (the voice of the Son of God) and shall come forth, they that have done good, to the Resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the Resurrection of damnation*. And how comes this great affair to be entrusted with our Lord Jesus Christ? And in what character will he execute it? He himself hath told us in the verse immediately preceding the passage just now quoted, that *the father hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the son of man*; which is one of the titles of the *Messiah*. It is as the *Messiah* then, or that great Person, who by his mediation hath restored all men to a capacity of eternal life and salvation, that he will first raise all men, and then judge them. And since this is the
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^p John v. 28.

present state of things, it may seem but a needless inquiry, what would have been, if Christ had not undertaken the office of Mediator. Probably the fall of the first man would not have affected his posterity, but on the prospect of their being as great gainers by the *second Adam*, as they are sufferers by the *first*; in which case, the Death and Resurrection of all mankind are equally parts of the same original plan.

The Resurrection of the wicked will indeed be a punishment. But whose fault is that? Not the Mediator's, who procured it for them as a blessing, but their own; who by their ill behaviour in these mortal bodies, and in this state of trial and probation, turn that which would have been a blessing into a curse. Let us no longer therefore think it a hard law which dooms the posterity to death for the sin of their first parents; for, not to argue from other considerations, it is enough, that *as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive*. Nor let it be objected, that all men indeed will rise, but much the greater part will rise to misery; there is no place for such an objection, because men, in the state of retribution, will not be punished for *Adam's* first sin, but for their own multiplied and heinous transgressions. The Resurrection is in itself a privilege, and intended for such by him that obtained it for us; otherwise we should be

obliged to say, that Jesus Christ came into the world, and died, that all but a few might be more miserable than else they would have been ; which God forbid we should think of him whose love to the children of men hath been always celebrated as without any parallel. That we shall rise we know, because Christ is risen ; that it is possible for us to attain to a happy Resurrection we likewise know, because upon any other supposition Christ would have been an enemy, as well as friend, to mankind ; but whether our Resurrection shall be *eventually* happy and glorious, depends on our present demeanour. It may be only the beginning of sorrows ; an introduction to a state of endless woe. And, if we may make a judgment of men by their lives and actions, it will be so to the most.

“ Ah, how should this startle and alarm
 “ us ! How should we fear lest these bodies
 “ being made the instruments of unrighte-
 “ ousness, should become, through the righ-
 “ teous judgment of God, the instruments
 “ of our misery, and inlets to none but pain-
 “ ful and grievous sensations. By this means,
 “ shall I not dearly pay for the few and
 “ superficial pleasures of sin ? Whence do
 “ the temptations to sin mostly, if not wholly,
 “ arise, but from these bodies ? Is it not to
 “ gratify the appetites and inclinations of this
 “ body, that I violate my duty to God ?
 “ And

“ And accordingly, when my body, in-
 “ stead of those pleasures which I once re-
 “ ceived from indulging its desires, shall
 “ be the vehicle or occasion of nothing else
 “ but pain and sorrow, shall I not be able to
 “ discern my sin in my punishment? And
 “ must it not therefore be great folly to in-
 “ dulse my body in forbidden instances?
 “ My sinful delights are trifling and in-
 “ considerable, my misery will be extreme;
 “ the former are fleeting and momentary, the
 “ latter will be everlasting.” So that the Re-
 surrection of the body, with the misery hence
 arising to the wicked, is a very good reason
 why all men should crucify the flesh with its
 affections and lusts, that so doing, they may
 secure their title to a happy Resurrection.

2. There is a more peculiar connection
 between the Resurrection of Christ, and the
 Resurrection of believers, correspondent to
 the special relation between their persons.
 Their alliance with Christ, and their inter-
 est in him, are such as none else can claim.
 They are not only allied to him by the
 same *human nature*, but by their participa-
 tion of a *divine nature*, that is, if we will
 speak strictly, by the exaltation of the hu-
 man nature in them, into a conformity to
 the divine. They are *brethren*, not merely
 as descended from the same common Father
 of mankind, but, as all good men are the
 sons of God by adoption, and as begotten

again to a new life after the image of Christ. The same *Spirit* is in the head and in the members. In *his incarnation* he partook of their *flesh*, by means of which he becomes related to all the sons of men; in *their regeneration* he makes them to partake of his *Spirit*, by virtue whereof the relation, before common, comes to be appropriate; and Christ is so theirs as to be theirs *only*. ⁹ *They are Christ's, and Christ is God's*. All shall hear the voice of the Son of God, but they only that have done good shall come forth to the Resurrection of life. Theirs shall be a blessed and glorious Resurrection, which can be said of none besides. And accordingly the Apostle, in that well-known Chapter the Fifteenth of the First of *Corinthians*, having made use of the Resurrection of Christ to establish the doctrine of the Resurrection in general, in the progress of that discourse, confines himself to the Resurrection of the just, which he describes in the most magnificent terms; *it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; &c.*

The Resurrection of believers to immortality of bliss and glory, might be shewn to follow from the Resurrection of Christ many ways. But forasmuch as this is an

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acknowledged truth among all that believe the Gospel, and evidently follows from what I have already said, waving any further proof of it, I shall only take notice, what a transporting prospect this is; what an irresistible motive *to bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us.* None but heavenly bodies can be qualified to enjoy the heavenly inheritance, for *flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God, neither shall corruption inherit incorruption.* How could the Gospel have proposed a nobler object of our hopes than this? Or how have more manifestly proved itself a doctrine *worthy of all acceptance?* Is the Resurrection of Christ a confirmation of our Religion? The Resurrection of good men, which that secures is not less a recommodation of it. I own this doctrine of a Resurrection was one of those things that prejudiced some of the heathens against Christianity, not only as apprehending it *impossible*, but a thing not to be *desired*. † “ The true awakening of the Soul
 “ (saith *Plotinus*, an enemy of our Religion) is
 “ an awakening from the body, and not a Re-
 “ surrection with the body; for that change,

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“ which

† *Stillingfleet's answer to Cressy.*

“ which is together with the body, is but
“ passing from sleep to sleep, as it were
“ from one bed to another ; but the true
“ awakening is from all bodies, which are
“ contrary to the soul, because the nature
“ of one is opposite to the other.” So far
this *Platonick* Philosopher. But now this
offence against the doctrine of the Resur-
rection proceeded from a manifest mistake ;
partly of the *primitive state* of human souls,
and partly of the *nature* of those bodies to
which the spirits of just men shall be unit-
ed after the Resurrection. As to the *pri-
mitive state* of human souls, they imagined
it to have been a state of disunion or sepa-
ration from any sensible body, in which
state they were inexpressibly happy, till for
some sin, or sins, that they were guilty of,
they were thrust down into these bodies,
in which they suffer a great deal by way
of punishment for their errors and offences
in a former state ; yet, so that if they puri-
fy themselves by the practice of virtue, they
shall finally be delivered from the body,
and live free and happy in a separate state,
as at first. This was their notion, which,
from the scripture-history of the creation,
we know to be false. That tells us that the
body was taken out of the dust of the
ground, and then the soul was breathed in-
to it ; and that this state was a state of
innocence, till men brought a change into
it,

it, by eating of the forbidden fruit; so that the soul was *originally* designed for a body, and not condemned to drag it about for a punishment.

And as they erred in their notion of the *primitive state* of human souls, so likewise with respect to the *nature* of those bodies, to which the souls of the righteous shall be restored. They found by experience, that the body as at present formed, was a torture and vexation; or, at best, a clog and a snare to the mind; and from hence they concluded, that it would be the same in a future state if raised again: for which reason they denied any such Resurrection, not considering that those ill qualities that cleave to our bodies at present, are not necessary appendages of matter, (for then those *ethereal* bodies, which they allowed of, having the same general nature of matter as any other bodies, would not be free from them) that the body that now is, is not the body that shall be; not as to its properties, though the substance be the same. They did not know, or attend to, the description given by inspired writers of the heavenly bodies of the saints; particularly, that they shall be bright, pure, active, spiritual, incorruptible, immortal; or did not believe that the matter of these bodies, in the hand of God himself, could put on these excellent qualities; which only argued their ignorance of the nature of matter,

matter, and of the almighty power, and infinite wisdom of God. Whatever these men might think, who were spoiled through a false philosophy, and vain deceit, or however meanly some others, who call themselves *Christians*, may talk of a Resurrection, being drawn away by the like foolish imaginations, the Resurrection of Christ should be a pleasing thought, for this very reason, that his Resurrection proves the Resurrection of all that truly believe in him, to eternal life, felicity, and glory. And there are these *two* uses which such should make of this hope, and both exceeding obvious. The first is to support them under all the inconveniences and sufferings which they undergo in these bodies of sin and death; the other to reconcile them to their departure out of these bodies.

1. The meditation and hope of a glorious Resurrection should support us under all the inconveniences and hardships it pleases God we should undergo in these bodies of sin and death. That we suffer no more than it pleases God we should, and than we must own ourselves to have deserved, ought for ever to silence all our complaints. But that which makes us not only patient but contented, and renders our afflictions not barely supportable, but light, so that we can *rejoice in tribulation*, is the reflexion, that it is no longer than while we are in these
bodies,

bodies, which is but for a moment, that we are liable to so many and sore trials, or to any at all; and the hope of those celestial bodies, in which our souls are to have their everlasting abode, bodies that will never occasion them the least uneasiness, tempt them to commit the least sin, or give them reason to think their union with them any hindrance to their freedom and happiness. The infelicities attending the soul at present, by means of its union with the body, are innumerable. *Sin dwells in this mortal body*; and sin exposes the body to suffering; it is *a body of sin*, and therefore *a vile body*, beset and encompassed with evils of various kinds, and itself full of them. It is by the body we are chained to all the unhappy occurrences of the world, and have a share in them, whether we will or no, which otherwise would affect us no more than they do a spirit in the other world. The body links us to outward objects, and is the foundation of those many sad and disagreeable perceptions that we receive from them. It is by the body, that one man is exposed to feel the malice and cruelty of another. And besides what the soul suffers from the world by the body, how much does it suffer from the body immediately; from its pains, its sicknesses, and disorders; from its dulness and weakness; from its inordinate passions and appetites; from its melancholy clouds

clouds and vapours. Had we not other bodies to expect, exempted from all these disadvantages, we should have need of a great deal of resolution to bear up under our burthens; and after all, should, in some uncommon cases, sink under them. If in this life only we had hope, man in some circumstances would be of all creatures most miserable, and the christian sometimes the most miserable of all men. But now the hope of another life sets man above the beasts of the field; and the assurance of consummate felicity both in soul and body, the christian above other men. Should we have a larger share of trouble, and sickness, and pain than many, or most others, (though by the way we are very apt to think it larger than it is, and our portion of good things less) yet we have no cause to repine as long as we have hopes of a part in the first Resurrection. No cause to repine, did I say? We have all possible cause to be easy, resigned, and thankful.

2. The thought and hope of the Resurrection should reconcile good men to their departure out of this body. As incommodious as this earthly tabernacle is, the soul is seldom willing to leave it; it would fain linger here a little longer, wear its chains a little longer, converse in this strange country a little longer. But *when this tabernacle is dissolved, are we not to have a building with*
God,

God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? Though we lay down our lives, are we not to take them again? Though soul and body part, the parting is not final; they are to meet again, and, as friends sometimes do after a long absence, shall find each other wonderfully improved. So that though we did not *groan in this tabernacle*, as we do, *being burthened*; though our dungeon was not so dark and dismal, and our abode in the world upon such hard terms, yet to consider the difference which at best there would be betwixt this world, and this body, and the next, should make us despise the one, and chuse the other.

At best this world is not heaven; this body is not a glorified body; the soul is here as a prince in a cottage; though it did not suffer, it would be sollicit to sin; though it was not miserable, it could hardly be said to be happy; at least in no respect, or degree, so happy as it will be after Death and the Resurrection; one of which must precede the other. And we may well be content to cross the narrow sea, was the passage a thousand times more stormy than we are like to find it, when we know ourselves to be in a safe bottom, and shall be landed on the shores of bliss and immortality. “ Go forth therefore, O my
“ soul, when thy master calls thee; go forth
“ readily and chearfully to meet him; re-
“ pine

“ pine not to leave the body, spurn this
 “ earth, and fly upwards to those mansions
 “ of light, where thou shalt rest in peace ;
 “ and joyfully, but not impatiently, wait
 “ the time appointed for the Resurrection
 “ of this body, and of all the bodies of the
 “ saints to glory and immortality !” I have
 now done with the Fifth Inference --- Christ
 being risen, we know that there will be a
 Resurrection of the dead, particularly of the
 righteous. To conclude.

VI. Christ being risen, let us all endeavour
to know him, and the power of his Resur-
rection. There is a great deal of force and
 virtue in this article of our Creed ; it in-
 spires life into those that seriously contem-
 plate it, and rightly improve it. *The Lord*
is risen indeed. Are we risen with him ? Are
 we *passed from death to life* ? Besides the Re-
 surrection of the body, which we expect
 hereafter, there is a change, and a very great
 one, which passes on the souls of the rege-
 nerate in this life, which is in scripture
 described under the metaphor of a Resur-
 rection. This is the Resurrection of *grace*,
 as that is the Resurrection to *glory* ; and
 one is necessary to prepare and qualify for
 the other. To what purpose is my Saviour
 risen, if I continue dead in trespasses and
 sins ? In vain do I call him my Saviour, as
 long as sin hath dominion over me ; since
 this is the very ground and reason of his
 name

name *Jefus*, that *he saveth his people from their fins*. Let us not think the Resurrection of Christ is, or can be, of any avail to us, till it hath infused a quickening power into our souls. Let us shew that we are risen with Christ by a *holy* and by a *heavenly* life.

1. Let us lead a *holy* life; denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and aiming at the greatest purity and perfection. Let a more entire freedom from sin be what we most ardently desire, and pray for, and what we most earnestly labour after. *We are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his Death, we shall be also in the likeness of his Resurrection.* There cannot be a Resurrection without a new life. Let us make it evident that we have *put off the old man, which is corrupt, with his affections and lusts*, by our *putting on the new man of the heart*. Let us be crucified with Christ, and live with him; and as when Christ died *he died unto sin once, but now that he liveth, he liveth unto God*; likewise let us reckon ourselves to be *dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord*.

2. That

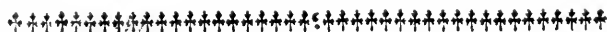
^r Rom. vi. 4, 5.

2. That we are risen with Christ let us shew by a *heavenly* life. So the Apostle reasons, *‘If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.* As it is certain we are begotten to a *new life*, if we are risen with Christ, so we know that the fountain of this life is in *heaven*, where, therefore, we ought to have our conversation. Christ is *our life*, (as the *Apostle* adds in the 4th verse) *with whom, when he appears, we also shall appear in glory.* Now Christ is not only risen, but ascended; this earth was not a place fit to entertain him after he had left the grave; his business lay in another world, and to that world he returned, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments to the *Apostles* whom he had chosen. In like manner we, if we be risen, shall be seeking a heavenly country, and while our bodies are detained here below, our souls will be mounting upward; we shall ascend in the visions of faith, and the raptures of holy love.

“ Why should I seek the living among
 “ the dead? My Lord is not here; he is
 “ risen and gone back to the Father; nei-
 “ ther is my happiness here. And why then
 “ should

“ should my heart be where I cannot hope
“ to find my Saviour or my felicity? It is
“ in yonder world, that my great, my lov-
“ ed Redeemer hath his abode; there are
“ the spirits of just men made perfect;
“ there God unveils his glorious face; there
“ my soul hopes to have its mansion after
“ death, and thither, after the Resurrection,
“ will my body naturally ascend. And
“ where then, but in that happy, glorious,
“ world, should my affections now dwell?
“ O let me not be a stranger to the thoughts
“ of heaven! While I sojourn in this vale
“ of tears, this land of darkness, this dis-
“ tracted sinful, wretched world, let me
“ be longing, and preparing for my hea-
“ venly home, where all tears shall be wip-
“ ed away from mine eyes, the light of
“ life break in upon them, and peace, and
“ innocence, and joy, shall be my portion
“ for ever.”





A

S E R M O N

PREACHED at the

O R D I N A T I O N

Of the Reverend

Mr. T H O M A S A M O R Y,

A N D

Mr. W I L L I A M C O R N I S H,

At *Taunton, Somerset*, Oct. 7, 1730.

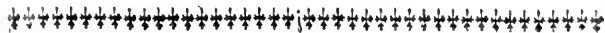
I N

Which, among other Things, the true Notion
of Preaching CHRIST, and the Decay of the
Dissenting Interest are briefly considered;

With a large

PREFACE concerning the Foundations of Mora-
lity, and the excellent Morals of the Gospel.

1731.







T H E

P R E F A C E.

HAVING in the following Discourse recommended to Ministers the insisting, as they have opportunity, on the reasonableness of the Christian Religion, particularly of its precepts, I thought it would not be altogether foreign to my design, if I spent a few pages by way of preface, in shewing that morality is originally founded in the nature and relations of reasonable Beings; and that it is one great excellency and commendation of the Religion of our blessed Saviour, that it hath given us a scheme of the purest, the most useful, and the most perfect morality that ever was.

By morality, I would not have my readers to imagine I understand any such low accomplishment as owes its rise wholly or chiefly to the dictates of civil prudence, or the rules of external decorum. I am contented that they call this pagan morality, or by any other name

that they please, so it be not pretended that this is all the morality that Reason leads men to practise. These things are good in their kind, and by no means to be neglected, but they come very short of the morality I am here speaking of; which, according to my notion of it, signifies such a temper and habit of mind as effectually determines a man to make the best use of his faculties; even that use of them which is most for the honour of the divine Being from whom he hath received them, for the benefit of other reasonable Beings, and the advancement of his own highest interest and happiness. This temper of mind is nothing else but the affection of love duly regulated and proportioned; regulated by the reason of things, and proportioned to the value and excellence of objects.

The nature of man *being considered, together with the relations he stands in to God, and his fellow-creatures, love is the first duty he owes both to them, and to himself; a love of desire, delight, and gratitude, mingled with an awful veneration to his Maker; a love of benevolence to other intelligent Beings; and a love enlightened by wisdom, not flowing from blind instinct, to himself. To this love, and by consequence, to all the actions that are the necessary effects, and genuine expressions of it, there must be an obligation antecedent in nature to any laws and precepts concerning it, whether human or divine. We are obliged*

to love God, not merely because he hath commanded us to love him, but because he hath made us capable of loving him, and both by his perfections and his benefits challenges our love. Did not these oblige us to love him as soon as we were in a condition to make any reflection on them, no subsequent command could oblige us to it. Why else are these things (viz. the perfections of the divine nature, and the kindness and love of God to us) mentioned as reasons of love which no ingenuous mind can resist? For if they are good reasons why we should love God, now that he commands it, they must be equally reasons for love antecedent to the consideration of any command whatsoever. And perhaps if we examine the matter a little narrowly, we shall find that the very command to love God supposes an obligation to love him prior to the command; this love, as an affection of the mind, having no other proper cause and motive than the amiable qualities, and beneficent actions of the person beloved. We do not, we cannot, love any Being with a love of esteem, of gratitude, and complacency, only because he requires it, but because he would deserve it, even tho' he did not require it. And therefore I humbly conceive, the command to love God does not so directly respect the affection of love itself, because this is not directly and immediately in our power; but our using those means that are proper to beget the love of

God in our souls, among others, the contemplation of his divine excellencies, and the relations subsisting between him and us, as he is our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer; and also, that we consider and do those things which may be expected from all such as have the love of God dwelling in them.

It were easy, after the same manner, to prove that an obligation to a wise and rational love of ourselves, and to the love of our neighbour as ourselves, immediately arises from the relations between us and other men, and from our character as Beings whose happiness depends on their own choice and behaviour. And when I say that we are from the reason of things under obligations to this love of God, our neighbour, and ourselves, and to the actions which as naturally flow from it (when they are in our power, and their connection with it is apprehended by the mind) as heat and light do from the fire; my meaning is, that the reason or nature of things demands it from us, that we should be liable to the reproaches of our own minds, and justly draw on ourselves the censures of others, and, above all the displeasure of the Author of our Beings, if we indulged to a contrary temper and manner of acting.

This obligation may be stiled an obligation of duty, inasmuch as love is due from men to men, and from men to God; and because due, is therefore enjoined under the sanction of rewards

rewards and punishments. God himself would not require the love and obedience of his creatures if it was not a debt which they owed him before, and every debt implies an obligation to payment. There is another obligation besides this, and very carefully to be distinguished from it, and that is an obligation of interest. It is manifestly our interest to obey God, because he can, and will reward us if we obey him, and punish us if we do not; and this being our interest, is therefore our prudence, but not, for that reason alone, our duty. On the contrary, there must be duty (the duty of love, and of unlimited obedience, as the consequence of love) antecedent to the command, and much more to the penalty. This is no more than saying that God, antecedent to his commanding any thing, hath a right to command it; for if there be an antecedent right on his part, there is an antecedent obligation on ours; and it is for this very reason that he lays his commands upon us, and to his commands adds threatenings, because the relation, of Creator and Creatures, of Benefactor and Beneficiaries, that is between him and us, gives him a right to command, and obliges us to obey. Were there no obligation but that of interest, there could be no duty, properly so called; and where there was no duty, there could be no punishment justly deserved, unless it be just to punish any one for not doing what he was not obliged to do,

do, or what he would not have been obliged to do, even by the command itself, had not the threatening been superadded; in which case the threatening must be unjust, and so consequently the punishment threatened. This obligation of duty may be increased by the consideration of those rewards and punishments which God hath annexed to his laws; not as these rewards and punishments immediately affect our interest and happiness, but as the promise of the reward, and the delight which God takes in bestowing it, are a manifestation of the divine goodness; and so likewise the threatening of the punishment (the punishment being therefore threatened that it may not be inflicted) and in that view strengthen our obligation to love and gratitude.

This, I take it, is a plain and intelligible account of those moral fitnesses in things, and essential and everlasting differences of actions, which some have as warmly and unaccountably denied, as others have strongly argued for them. All rational Beings are moral agents; such an agent is man, capable of discerning a difference in actions, that some of them are suitable to his nature, and the circumstances of his Being, others not; and of chusing and determining according to this difference. Now there being such a difference between things and actions, as to their agreement or disagreement with his rational nature (e. g. between gratitude to God, and ingra-

ingratitude) there is a manifest fitness in some and unfitness in others, and these fitnesses or unfitnesses, as far as the former, are the object of a complacential choice, and the latter of a deliberate dislike, and both these are free, may justly be called moral, because they regard moral agents, and these, as considered in their moral capacity; and these moral agents are properly obliged to govern themselves by these fitnesses, because they will be worthy of blame, if they do not.

It may not be unuseful to unfold this matter a little more distinctly. Notwithstanding then the ideas of natural and moral fitness, and of natural and moral good are not formally the same, yet there is an inseparable connection between them; so that no disposition or action can be fit or good in a natural sense, but there must be a moral fitness attending it, and when cloathed with its proper circumstances, it will be morally good. The actions of Virtue and Religion have a natural fitness or goodness in them, as they are in their own nature adapted to answer several valuable ends and purposes. e. g. the love of God, a constant regard to him in the whole of our behaviour, and solemn acts of worship, being agreeable to that state of dependence which all created Beings have on the first and uncreated, and expressive of their sense of this their dependence, and of the goodness of God which hath communicated life with all the advantages of it to them, are there-

therefore naturally fit and good. In the same sense, justice and charity have an undisputed fitness and goodness, because it is by these that sociable Beings contribute to their mutual advantage and pleasure, and without them had better live apart than together. And who is there that reflects on the apparent tendency of temperance, and the right employment of our time and thoughts to preserve the body in health and vigour, and to improve and enlarge the mind, but must be forced to acknowledge that there is a natural goodness and fitness in these things? This may serve to explain the natural fitness and goodness of Virtue and Religion. They are denominated naturally fit and good, not as if the object of them was immediately some natural good, or pleasure, but from their natural fitness or goodness to answer some considerable end.

From this natural fitness that which is moral can no more be disjoined, than eligibleness can be from happiness, or loveliness from beauty and proportion. For because the actions and dispositions before mentioned are fitted to answer all good ends, therefore it is fit that Beings, capable of it, should deliberately chuse to perform such actions, not now and then, but constantly; and make it their endeavour to excel in such dispositions. This, I say, is morally fit, that rational, free, and active Beings, should exercise their Reason in convincing themselves of the excellency, and congruity

gruity of Virtue and Religion, their freedom in the choice of them, and all the powers of their nature in an agreeable course of action. *If there be a right and a wrong in the use of our faculties, this use of them is right, and the contrary would be wrong; and to a Being that can distinguish between right and wrong, there is an indispensable moral fitness in the former, and unfitness in the latter. In spite of their utmost endeavours to extinguish in themselves the sense of good and evil, men are invincibly conscious, that one way of using their faculties is good, and another evil; that it is reasonable and fit that they should observe and follow this distinction, and that it will be impossible, blind as they are to their own failings, they should ever forgive themselves, if they do not. These two things then are plainly distinguishable, the natural fitness of an action to answer some valuable end, and the rational and delightful choice of it, which is its moral fitness; distinguishable I say, not separable; since it is not a thing subject to the determination of any will whatsoever whether it shall be fit for a reasonable Being to act reasonably; and whether he shall be obliged so to act; the thing is essentially, unchangeably, and everlastingly necessary.*

Nor does this notion of moral fitnesses and obligations not depending upon will and pleasure, but necessarily resulting from the nature and reason of things, at all derogate from the
honour

honour of the Deity. On the contrary, one of the clearest and most convincing arguments in behalf of these necessary fitnesses and obligations is that which is drawn from the moral perfections of the divine nature, which can never be proved on any other principles. In a late Controversy between two eminent Divines of the Established Church, One of them puts this question, Whether if God had commanded men to be unjust and ungrateful, it would have been morally good to be unjust and ungrateful? To which the other answers, that it is putting an absurd, self-contradictory supposition, for it is supposing a God that is not necessarily wise and good, a God and no God.* But where, I pray, is the absurdity of this question, in case there be no moral fitnesses with regard to human actions, previous in nature to the will of God? If there be no such fitnesses with regard to human actions, neither can there be with respect to the divine, till God hath willed them; and then his willing

* As absurd as he accounts this supposition, a writer called *Zeglovius*, was not ashamed formerly to tell the world, that God may please out of the absolute sovereignty of his Will to command all that wickedness he hath forbidden, and to forbid all that holiness he hath commanded. Now we may suppose he would not have talked thus, if he had judged it to be a necessary consequence of the principle, that things are morally good or evil only because God hath commanded or forbidden them. Vid. *Free discourse between two intimate friends in defence of the principles and practices of some moderate Divines of the Church of England.* Printed 1670.

ing any thing, whatever it be, will make it morally fit. Was it morally fit that God should govern his reasonable creatures according to the natures he had given them, and reward or punish them according to their actions? Grant this, and it will unavoidably follow, that there was the same fitness that men should act according to the nature they had received from God; since if there was no fitness that men should act according to their nature and relations, but what was produced by the will of God that they should so act, there was then no fitness, unless the plainest reasonings of our minds may deceive us; and could be none, for God's governing men according to their nature and relations, but what depended upon the same absolute will. After the existence of God, and the perfection of his nature is taken for granted; yet that this, or that, is a perfection, we must have some way of knowing before we can say that God is possessed of it. We could have no ground to affirm, that God is true, just, and good, but upon the supposition that truth, and justice, and goodness do necessarily imply perfection or something better than the contrary; and if, on this account, we attribute them to God as necessary perfections of his nature, we must, on the same account, esteem man obliged to practise, and imitate God in them as the perfection of his; the imitation being possible, and a foundation laid for it in the frame of every reasonable Being.

The notion of moral fitnesses being thus stated and defended, let any impartial person judge whether a late writer (not quite so remarkable for his candour as his talents) hath given a fair representation of it, when he charges those on that side with going upon the independent bottom, and setting up a system of morality without God at the head of it. One would think by this, that the opinion of moral fitnesses and obligations was the offspring of atheism, or very near a-kin to it, and that Hobbs, and others of that fraternity were the great patrons of it. Whereas the truth of the case is, that none have opposed the moral differences of things and actions so much as the atheists have done, and they who have appeared for them have been the most strenuous and successful assertors of the principles of Religion. This will need no proof as long as there are such names as Grotius, Cudworth, Clarke, Woolaston, &c. It is not supposed by these independent schemists, as he calls them, that there is any such thing as obligation previous in time to the will of God, but only in order of nature; neither is it supposed that this obligation hath properly the nature of a law (to which word the idea affixed is that of the will of a rightful superior) but as it receives the stamp or seal of a divine command: nor finally, do they suppose that the commands of God can extend to no other actions but such as had an original and antecedent fitness in them. On the contrary,

from

from the nature and dependence of man, and the authority, wisdom, and goodness of God, they infer the obligation of man to obey God without reserve. The obligation to obedience necessarily results from the nature of things, while some of the particular instances and trials of this obedience may depend entirely on the will of God.

There is one objection lies against this account of moral obligations, which I the rather take notice of because in answering it I shall have an opportunity to shew the meanness and inconsistency of the contrary principles. Let us (saith the ingenious author before quoted) imagine fitnesses to be the rule to go by, and no Deity at the head of them to bind and enforce them, it may be fit for a man to observe them as far as is consistent or coincident with his temporal happiness; and that will be no virtue or duty, but self-interest only and love of the world.—But if God commands us to postpone our present interest, honour, or pleasure to publick considerations, it is then fitting and reasonable because God by engaging us to it becomes our security that we shall not finally, or in the last result be losers by it; what would otherwise be folly, now commences duty and virtue, and puts on obligation.

Here I must take leave to ask, who supposes that there are fitnesses without a Deity at the head of them, to bind and enforce them?

On the contrary, because there are eternal and unchangeable fitnesses in things, we therefore conclude it to be the pleasure of the eternal and unchangeable Being, and that it ever will be so, that his reasonable creatures should do whatsoever is thus fit and becoming. And it is only from these unchangeable fitnesses in things that we can be certain of the unchangeableness of God in his purposes, and government of the world.

Again ; setting aside a future state, it may not be very easy to prove that a man is obliged to do any thing inconsistent with his own present happiness in order to promote the happiness of others ; nay, I believe, was the matter to be decided by vote, it would be carried by a great majority that no man is obliged to this, and that the thing is not in itself morally fit. Not to enter into a needless dispute, be it so, all that follows from hence is, that the principles of human actions are not all of the same force and efficacy ; nor fitnesses of the same rank and order ; that self-love, as an instinct will prevail against benevolence, and as a duty may be allowed to do it, should they happen to interfere in the last result. This, I say, is what follows from hence, but by no means that there is no such thing as a benevolent temper, natural or acquired, or that whoever refuses to do kind and benevolent actions at the expence of his own Being and happiness, hath nothing of benevolence in him ;
and

and when he does that which is right in itself is not moved to it by virtue and duty, but only by self-love, and the love of the world.

A benevolent disposition, and a sense of duty may be the principle of the service he does his fellow-creatures, though this benevolent disposition does not work so strongly as self-love, and must therefore, as often as there is a competition of interests, give place to it, and a man might not think it his duty to make a sacrifice of his all for the sake of others. Let self-love compared with benevolence be in weight but as eight to seven, it is evident that the balance will break on the side of self-love, and yet benevolence hath really the same weight then as at other times, though not the same effect, (as seven of any kind of weight hath against eight of the same weight) and accordingly, let self-love be taken out of the opposite scale, or a small part of self-love weigh against the whole of benevolence (that is, a lesser inconvenience of our own against some very great advantage of a neighbour, or of the publick) and there are thousands in the world who would immediately discover by their actions that they were no strangers to benevolence.

And it is very remarkable that in those instances in which from a superiority of self-love men prefer their own interest to that of others, they seldom, if ever, act with that full bent of nature, and that perfect ease and satisfaction of mind as when they can by one and the same

action do themselves a kindness, and another man too; or be serviceable to others, though they have no private advantage by it. Where is that person who in a shipwreck would not be better pleased to save the lives of others together with his own, than to be under a necessity, if he will save himself, of thrusting off another from a plank that would sink with the weight of both? The pleasure of the escape would by such a circumstance be exceedingly diminished. If when the happiness of this life is supposed to be our whole happiness, we must not be allowed in any of our beneficent actions to be influenced by a principle of virtue, but by self-love only, because we should decline doing those actions were they irreconcilable with that happiness; for the very same reason it would be purely self-love, and not virtue or duty, to do the same actions only because God is our security that we shall not finally in the last result be losers by them. Why must it destroy the notion of Virtue and Duty, so far to regard our present happiness as not to act in opposition to it, in case our present happiness be our all, any more than having regard to a future happiness does it; since self alike preponderates on both suppositions?

On the foot which this Author makes the whole of obligation to rest upon, it seems to me that there can be no such thing as Virtue; that even the exactest obedience to the divine command would not be so. For see how he fur-
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ther explains himself. If God commands it (that we sacrifice our own temporal happiness to the publick) he binds us, he obliges us to it, by connecting our true and certain happiness with it. When we submit to temporal pains, self-denials, restraints, losses, damages, for the publick good, this is properly virtue. And yet this is not virtue unless God commands it, because that alone can make it in our circumstances rational, fitting or safe to do it. *And again,* the obligation to obey God resolves into the necessity we are under as rational and thinking Beings, to pursue our own most true and lasting happiness. *What can be plainer than that according to this representation of the matter we do nothing for the sake of our fellow-creatures, or because God hath commanded it, but because he will reward it? And if we esteem the obligation to come wholly from hence, and should never do good actions but on this account, (viz. from the prospect of future happiness, not from favours already received &c.) where is the duty, where is the love of God and our neighbour? But now, when (though the reward promised by God be an additional motive to action, and we should not seek the publick good in instances that did not stand with our intire interest) we yet do good from a benevolent temper, and because we are persuaded it is our duty to do it, especially as God hath commanded it, whom we obey from a sense of*

its being fit and becoming, as well as for our interest, that we should do so, here is virtue, and love, and goodness, but upon no other hypothesis that I can see.

To me it appears a very strange way of thinking; we do good to others because we are inclined, and believe that we ought to do it, and yet because we should not judge ourselves obliged to it, if our temporal happiness (supposed to be our all) was to be the price of it, and our disinterested inclinations would in this case be over-ruled by a stronger regard to ourselves, therefore there is no virtue or benevolence in what we do. On the other hand, we do good, not because we have really any inclination to it, and think it to be fit and becoming on several considerations, particularly God's having commanded it, but solely on the account of the reward promised in another life, therefore this is not self-interest, but duty, virtue, the love of God and of man. This sort of reasoning is, I own, past my comprehension.

Upon the whole, this notion which resolves all obligation into the promises and threatenings annexed to the law of God, or, which is the same thing, into the hopes and fears of mens minds raised by them, though it presupposes the will of God which hath enacted the law, and fixed the sanction, yet, under pretence of doing more honour to God and his law, hath in reality no respect to them at all,
but

but terminates wholly in self-interest; whilst the other notion which asserts obligations antecedent in nature to the will of God, carries in it a tacit acknowledgment of the necessary and immutable perfections of God, and of his unmerited favour which hath bestowed Being with all the privileges belonging to it; forasmuch as among these antecedent obligations, the obligation to the love of God, and a cheerful obedience to his will, is one of the principal. This being so, the only persons that can have any colour for charging this opinion as wanting in a proper regard to God, are they who hold all that this opinion implies, and abundantly more, even an obligation so to love God for his own sake, as for his sake to consent to be miserable, an obligation to put off self entirely, and renounce all views to any interest of our own.

Men in distress of conscience (*saieth one of this superangelical way, as I find him cited, for I have not the book*) if they have comfort from Christ are contented, if they have salvation from hell by Christ they are contented, but Christ himself (*that is, Christ without comfort and without salvation*) contents them not. *This I confess is such a flight in Religion as leaves all other schemes, even that which unites the love of God with self-love, far below it. But it hath one unhappiness attending it, and that is, that it is absolutely impracticable. It is a very just ob-*

servation, that all which such Discourses can do is either to make men hypocrites, by pretending to do what they cannot, or to make honest men, who cannot thus cheat and delude themselves, despair of their salvation, because they cannot find themselves contented without it. To which I shall only add, that when God and nature, reason and scripture have joined the love of God with the hope of a reward, it is but presumption in any man to endeavour to put them asunder.

The other thing which I observed in the entrance of this Preface was, that one great excellence and commendation of the Religion of our blessed Saviour is this, that it hath given us a scheme of the purest, the most useful, and the most sublime morality that ever was. This will not be denied by any one that peruses the original records of Christianity, I mean the scriptures of the New Testament, with an unprejudiced mind, and considers in what a native simplicity of language, and yet with what a commanding authority, the most exalted maxims and rules of life are there delivered. Is not our reason as much pleased and satisfied as our corrupt inclinations are offended with that Religion in which the noblest heights of divine and human virtues, sacrificing our lives for the truth, forgiving injuries, doing good for evil, the most raised devotion, the most spiritual worship, the most active gratitude, the most extensive and disinterested bene-

volence,

volence, the greatest purity, the most unaffected humility, and, in fine, the most generous contempt of all the perishing enjoyments of time and sense, are taught; and not only taught but pressed upon us by considerations drawn from the imitation of the most perfect of all Beings, from the example of the incarnate word, from the love of God and of Jesus, from the glorious discoveries that are made to us in the Gospel, and the bright and lovely hopes to which it hath begotten us; that is, by the most powerful and persuasive arguments that can possibly enter into the heart of man to conceive. Such a morality as this, so recommended and enforced, is certainly a very great honour to our Religion. For the same reason that proves there must be moral duties, which having their foundation in the nature of things are immediately obligatory upon all reasonable Beings, makes it evident that the will of God cannot but always conspire with the reason of things; so that it is alike impossible that God should not command such things as are morally fit and becoming, and that he should command any thing that hath the least moral unfitness in it; that therefore the doctrine of Christ being qualified to stand this test, and never appearing so lovely and excellent as when it is tried by it, hath one very considerable mark of its being a divine Religion, and leaves no room for reasonable doubt that it is so when the other arguments

ments for its truth, from miracles, prophecies, success, &c. are added to this.

*The inference from all which is, that we are exceedingly indebted to the author of our faith as upon other accounts so particularly on this, that, in the present corrupt state of mankind, when human reason was so enfeebled by lust and passion, perverted and over-ruled by established customs, and bewildered among the numberless and clashing opinions into which the world was divided, he hath set before us in the clearest and most engaging light the whole duty and interest of man. Should it therefore be granted that Christianity, as to the main of its precepts, was as old as the creation, yet forasmuch as truth had slept or been imprisoned almost from the beginning of the world to the coming of Christ, (I speak of the greater part of mankind) and error had walked abroad in its name, and both challenged and received the honours due to it, what thanks does he deserve at our hands who set the prisoner free, and drove the impostor and usurper from many of its strong holds? Let the excellent morals of the Christian Religion have been as old as time itself, yet it is certain that in several respects they were new to the world when our Saviour republished them. And what then are we to think of men that can argue after this absurd and perverse manner? "There
 " can be no such thing as a revealed Religion,
 " because if that which pretends to be so contains
 " nothing but what the light of nature dictates
 " to*

“ to all men, it is needless; and if it adds
 “ any thing beyond what that teaches, it is
 “ false, and so is in neither case to be ad-
 “ mitted under the character of a divine and
 “ supernatural revelation.” As if God might
 not see proper to institute positive duties for
 the trial of the obedience and resignation of his
 creatures, to fence the moral law, or to be in
 some other way subservient to it, or even in
 compliance with the innocent prejudices of man-
 kind who would be less pleased with a revelation
 that prescribed none but natural duties; or might
 not have good reasons for such commands that
 did not always and on first sight appear to us;
 or as if the circumstances of man fallen and
 innocent, enjoying a revelation and destitute
 of it, being different, new duties would not
 arise out of these different circumstances; and
 finally, as if it was no kindness to have such a
 plain and compleat summary of duties prepared
 to our hands as reason could not have disco-
 vered, and put together without a great deal of
 difficulty, and perhaps never actually did, es-
 pecially in the advantageous manner in which
 the precepts of the Gospel are conveyed to us,
 being attended with the promise of divine as-
 sistance, and established by the sanction of an
 everlasting reward.

On the other hand, tho’ I would not know-
 ingly give any just ground of offence, yet I can-
 not forbear, before I close this Preface, taking
 occasion to lament the great prejudice which

Chri st

Christianity hath suffered thro' the indiscreet zeal of some persons who, I doubt not, are very sincere in the profession of it. For while they set Revelation and Reason at variance one with the other they undesignedly gratify the infidels, to whom no concession can be more acceptable than that Christianity hath little or no support from Reason, and declares open war against it; which, tho' it may be very true of some things to which men have given the name of Christian Doctrines, is utterly false of Christianity itself, which is no less the wisdom than the power of God to salvation to them that believe.

It were well if some persons would allow themselves to use their Reason so far as to examine the Doctrines which they have been taught to believe by their natural influence upon the duties and virtues of the christian life. This rule they can have the less to object against, because it agrees with that laid down by our blessed Saviour himself, by their fruits ye shall know them; for I imagine it will appear probable to those who carefully read the context, that by their fruits (the fruits of the false prophets) we are, in part, if not chiefly, to understand the corrupt fruits of their doctrines, which might properly be called their fruits, both because the doctrines, which had a natural tendency to produce these fruits, were taught by them, and their teaching such doctrines proceeded from the depravity of their hearts.
And

And if this was our Saviour's meaning, it is plainly implied, that no true doctrine can have a bad influence on the practical part of Religion, any more than a good tree can bring forth evil fruit.

Are there any Doctrines then, the obvious tendency of which, instead of inspiring and cherishing the love of God, is to damp the flame of that divine affection, and to beget a servile tormenting fear, which that love was intended to cast out, together with endless and unanswerable doubts and jealousies; to darken our contemplations of God, to check our devout aspirations towards him, and to unfit us for those exercises of praise and thanksgiving in which every pious christian should be perpetually employed; Doctrines which, when followed into their plain consequences, harden the heart against the more generous and humane passions, confine, and debase it, countenance any wrong turn and disposition of mind, and teach men to think slightly of the necessity of holiness; in a word, which lead them astray from God while they think they are imitating him; are there any such Doctrines as these? To say the least, no good man should be very hasty in giving them credit, or very fond of holding them fast, how long soever they have had possession of him. For truth is ever uniform and consistent with itself, truth in the understanding with truth in the will, affections, and practice. Christianity is a system composed of two other systems,

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one of things to be believed, the other of things to be done; and between these two there is such a perfect harmony, they are so adjusted one to the other, and receive so much light and support one from the other, that as the beauty and strength of the whole is hereby greatly increased, so to a serious and judicious mind it must appear to be a frame of Religion put together by a divine hand.

If the Sermon bath little in it to entertain the reader, yet it is hoped that it may fare somewhat the better for the sake of the excellent Charge it introduces, which gave very great pleasure and satisfaction from the Pulpit; and, there is reason to think, will not be less acceptable to all impartial persons from the Press.*

* In the first Edition of the Sermon there was published with it a Charge, delivered on the same Occasion, by Dr. Milner.





S E R M O N XIII.

On Living unto CHRIST.

PHILIP. I. 21.

For to me to live is Christ.

AMONG all the first conversions to the Christian Faith, which were very surprizing upon other accounts besides the greatness of their numbers, there was not one (at least of those that are come down to our knowledge) so remarkable as that of the Apostle *Paul*; as there was no one person who, after his conversion, proved a more able and zealous advocate for the cause he had espoused. If an excess in his regard to the *Law of Moses*, and a mistaken notion of it as intended to continue forever, had been the only hindrances to his becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ, we may justly suppose so great a master of reason as he was, and a man of equal integrity, could not long have stood out against the

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the evidence which the Gospel came attended with: but we are to consider, that he was a *Pharisee* as well as a *Jew*, bred up in a sect of their religion that was strict even to superstition, and *was more exceedingly zealous than many of his equals in his own nation of the traditions of his fathers*^a; that is, of *rights*, and *ceremonies*, and *articles of faith* that were not to be found in the *Law* and the *Prophets*, but had been added to them, in the way of *supplement*, by the *wisdom of men*. And this it was that prejudiced him so highly against the Christian Religion on account of its simplicity, and made him a persecutor of all that professed it. A man of his honest nature, and good understanding, could never else have fallen into a practice which the first principles of *humanity* condemn. And, perhaps, it will be found upon inquiry, that there never was such a thing as persecution *merely* for truth's sake. *Pure religion, and undefiled before God* tends to inspire a meek, a gentle; and charitable spirit; and I believe never fails of being accompanied with it, if not counteracted in its influence: but when the opinions and commandments of men are taught for the doctrines and institutions of God, these, having no foundation in *reason* or *scripture*, must be supported by human authority, and this authority defended by outward force and

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^a Gal. i. 14.

compulsion, because not capable of any better proof.

Such a one was *Paul* in his *unbelief*. And what then shall we say, when, on a sudden, we find him so entirely changed from what he was before? ^b *A preacher of the faith which he once destroyed; and ready, for the name of Christ, not only to be bound, but to die; even for that name, which, as much as he once hated it, he now revered and loved next to the name of God himself?* No two persons could well differ more widely from one another than *Saul the Pharisee* did from *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ*. And from what could such an alteration in his behaviour proceed but from a real deep conviction of his mind? Or to what must we ascribe this conviction but to those extraordinary causes of it mentioned in the sacred history; viz. a *light*, and *voice* from heaven, when he was on his way to *Damascus*; attended, we may suppose, with ^c *a revelation of Christ within him*; from this first, and from the *demonstration of the spirit* afterwards, in his miraculous powers, of which he both largely partook himself, and was made a steward or dispenser to others? To which may be added the apparent excellency of the christian doctrine, which, as soon as his prejudices gave him leave to attend to it, *entered into his heart, and was pleasant to his soul.*

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^b Gal. i. 23. Acts xxi. 13. ^c ix. 3, 4:

In this single conquest we behold *the arm of the Lord* most signally revealed, and cannot forbear crying out, “surely the Religion “ of Jesus is divine!” Our faith receives an additional confirmation from that of *St. Paul*, and our zeal is enkindled by his. When we find this great and good man valuing himself upon being an ^d *Apostle*, a *Servant*, ^e a *Prisoner of Jesus Christ*; ^f determined to know nothing among the *Corinthians* but *Christ* and *him crucified*; and, in this First Chapter of his Epistle to the *Philippians*, ^g *re-joicing that Christ was preached*, tho’ by those who were no friends of his; nay, expressing his desire that Christ ^h *might be magnified in his body, whether it was by life, or by death*; and then, as the reason of this, declaring (what all his actions made good) that *to him to live was Christ, and to die was gain*: when, I say, we consider all this, who, that hath the least spark of devotion for his Redeemer, does not perceive it awakened and increased by this illustrious example, and resolve that to him likewise *to live shall be Christ*, in the fullest meaning of those words that he can possibly come up to?

My design, in the following Discourse, is briefly to set before you this most amiable character in several views.

I. As

^d Rom. i. 1. ⁱ Cor. i. 1. ^e Eph. iv. 1. ^f 1 Cor. ii. 2. ^g Ver. 18. ^h Ver. 20.

- I. As exemplified most eminently, and to the greatest degree of perfection, in the *Apostles* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
- II. As belonging, in a lower degree, to the faithful Ministers of Christ in every age of the church, and worthy of their utmost ambition and care to excel in it.
- III. As that by which all the genuine professors of the Gospel are known, and distinguished.

The general character of all these ever hath been, and ever will be, one and the same. Good men have always agreed in their regard to Christ as their *Saviour*, their *Pattern*, and their *Lord*; and as well they who never saw Christ in the flesh as those who conversed personally with him, have loved him more than the dearest comforts and enjoymentsⁱ of life, more than life itself. Nor could it be otherwise, since Christ being the life of holy souls^k, the spring and fountain of their spiritual life, by means of which he liveth in them, and the author of an eternal life in the heavens, all such cannot but ^l *live unto the Lord*. Which, by the way, I take to be an expression exactly parallel to that in the text; for whether it be said that *we live unto Christ*, or that *to us to live is*

K k 2 *Christ,*

ⁱ Mat. x. 37, 38, 39. ^k Col. iii. 4. ^l Rom. xiv. 8.

Christ, the meaning seems to be this, that *the love of Christ* in our souls is our governing principle, the *authority of Christ* in the Gospel our constant rule, and the *honour and interest of Christ* in the world our chief aim; that by these we give laws to our inclinations, purify and exalt our passions, frame our designs, and conduct the whole course of our actions; all which concur, as so many lines, in this center; that our thoughts and pursuits are connected, controuled, or quickened, by this one view; I mean, in some good measure, and according to the proportion of our love to the Redeemer.

This, which hath been the common and ruling character of such as have ^m *loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity*, from the first foundation of the christian church to this day, makes an essential difference between them and all others, who, whatever good words and fair speeches they may make use of to deceive the simple, and themselves too the simplest of all, have no right to say, that *to them to live is Christ*, since, in reality, they *live only to themselves, walk after their own lusts*, and lead a sensual and worldly life, suitably to that worldly and sensual spirit which reigns in them.

But then besides this difference between true Christians and false, which constitutes characters essentially opposite, there is a diversity

versity in the same character, arising from the different functions, offices, and stations of life, in which the followers of Christ are called to serve him. The unity of their character consists in their unfeigned affection to their common Lord, approved by their sincere obedience to all his laws and commandments; the variety of it in the several ways of expressing their affection, according to their several capacities of service, their place and order in the church, and the special duties belonging thereto. Let us now therefore proceed to consider this most excellent character in its principal views. And,

I. Let us consider it as exemplified most eminently, and to the greatest degree of perfection, in the *Apostles* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I say in the *Apostles*, and not in *St. Paul* only, because in this and other places, where he speaks directly in his own person, we ought to understand him as tacitly including the rest of the *Apostles*, unless the thing spoken was manifestly peculiar to this *Apostle*, or the circumstances of the place restrain it to him; especially, when he sometimes expressly joins them with himself, as particularly in the *1 Cor. iv. 9,—13.* *God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed unto death; for we are made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and men, &c.*

If we enquire what was the *office* of the *Apostles*, we shall find that they were chosen to plant the Religion of Christ in the world, and to be his witnesses among all nationsⁿ. In discharging which high trust they were *indefatigable*, and *faithful to the death*; and that which made them so was nothing else but *their great affection to their Lord and Master*.

I. *They were indefatigable in the duties of their function, and faithful to the death.* Their zeal in the cause of their crucified Master was without example. One thing did they desire, and labour after, and that was to draw disciples unto Christ; and if they did not *draw all men to him*, it was no fault of theirs, who were the best servants of the best Master that ever was. ^o *All things were by them counted but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the savour of which they endeavoured to spread in every place; travelling, as it is probable, while they were on land, from place to place on foot^p like their Master before them, ^q who went about doing good; and, as it were, forgetting their own country, and their father's house, that they might carry the light of the Gospel into distant regions of the earth. It might be truly said of them, as of the Pharisees (but in a more honour-*

^a Mat. xxviii. 19. Acts i. 8. ^o Phil. iii 8.

^p Acts xx. 13. ^q x. 38.

honourable sense) that they *compassed sea and land to make proselytes*; not, as the *Pharisees* did, to some favourite and corrupt opinions of their own, but to a *doctrine* that was *according to godliness*. Great was their patience in sustaining so many toils and difficulties; great their courage which encountered with the most universal and violent opposition, and overcame it. One would have thought, they had not the same appetites, and passions, and weaknesses as other men, by the little regard which they shewed them. For Christ's sake they ^r *took pleasure in distresses*; ^r *rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name*; ^r *endured hunger, and thirst, and nakedness*; *were buffeted, had no certain dwelling place, being reviled they blessed, being persecuted they meekly suffered it, were made the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things*. Yet did ^u *none of these things move them, neither counted they their lives dear to them, that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God*. In the midst of dangers, they went on in the steady prosecution of their design, and did not fail, nor were discouraged, *till they had set judgment in the earth, and the isles that were afar off had received the christian law*. They were the

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^r 2 Cor. xii. 10. ^r Acts v. 41. ^r 1 Cor. iv. 11, 12, 13. ^u Acts xx. 24.

persons by whose ministry the world of mankind was prepared, and presented as a kind of offering to God; and when this was done they thought their blood could not serve to a more honourable use than, like the wine or oil upon the antient sacrifices, to be poured out as a *libation*, to render it more solemn and compleat. To this sense is that of the *Apostle Paul*, Phil. ii. 17. *If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.* In a word, they, who while their Master was with them, were at strife which of them should be accounted the greatest^w, after their Master was taken from them, seeming to contend for nothing so much as who should deny himself most for his sake, and be most conformable to him in his sufferings and death.

2. *Their affection to their Master and nothing else, was that which made them willing to pass through so many difficulties in propagating his Religion.* Their's were *the labours of love, which they shewed to his name.* We cannot reasonably ascribe their conduct to any other cause. Their seeming zeal for Christ could not proceed from a real concern for themselves, and the advancement of their own by-ends, all which they evidently renounced. So far were they from seeking their own glory, that they studiously declined any part of the honour that might redound to them
from

^w Luke xxii. 24.

from the wonderful works they performed; a remarkable instance of which we have in the cure of the ^x *lame man* who sat at the gate of the temple asking alms of them that entered in; for when, being healed of this malady, beyond his expectation, *he held Peter and John, and all the people ran together unto them greatly wondering, Peter addressing himself unto them, saith, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? Or why look ye so earnestly upon us, as though by our own holiness or power we had made this man to walk? The God of our fathers hath glorified his Son Jesus; and his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong whom ye see and know; yea, the faith, which is by him, hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.* They did not discover the least inclination to set up separate parties and factions, who should be called after their names, and by whom they might be admired and applauded. When something of this humour began to shew itself in the Church of *Corinth*, (one saying he was of ^y *Paul*, another of *Apellos*, another of *Cephas*, and another of *Christ*) it was immediately discountenanced by the *Apostle Paul*, who asks them, not without some warmth, *Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized into the name of Paul? Who is Paul, and who is Apollos but ministers by whom*

z Acts. iii. 1, &c.

y 1 Cor. i. 12, 13.

whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man ^z? As worldly wealth and power, the ease and pleasures and pomp of life, were not actually the rewards of their labours, so they could never be so very simple as to think that they would be. They could not hope to conquer the world by a shew of contemning it, and, after that was done, to sit down and enjoy the fruits of their conquest in a dominion established upon the credulity of mankind, and in a life of sensual pleasure and indulgence. Such imaginations as these were too romantick to enter into the heads of any men but of *common sense*; and he must be a perfect stranger to the preaching and writings of the *Apostles* who will not allow them to have had that.

Should any charge them with a *love of singularity*, I would for once borrow what a late advocate * for infidelity hath offered to clear the *Deists* of the present age from a like imputation. “ Would any man (*saitb* “ *he*) affect singularity in Religion when it “ must expose him to the hatred of the “ priest-hood, the bigots, and the immoral? “ ——— And when by this means one is look- “ ed on as a monster by ninety nine in a “ hundred, and others scarce dare give him “ any countenance? What hath this unhap- “ py

^z 1 Cor. iii. 5.

* Author of an Address to the Inhabitants of *London* and *Westminster*, in relation to the Bishop of *London's* Pastoral Letter.

“ py man but conscience to support him?
 “ — How can men quit those opinions
 “ which they owe to the strong prejudice of
 “ education, and the stronger of interest,
 “ for new opinions, without comparing the
 “ reasonableness and fitness of one with the
 “ flaws and weakness of the other?” So far
 he. Let any impartial person apply this rea-
 soning to the case of the *Apostles*, and their
 exchanging the hope of a *temporal deliverer*
 (with which the whole nation of the *Jews*
 was obstinately prepossessed) for faith in a *crucified Jesus*, and it will appear to be as
 just and strong, as it is weak and fallacious
 when used in defence of our modern un-
 believers.

If it be said, that the *Apostles* were influ-
 enced by a prospect of *fame after death*, and
 of the power which their *successors* might
 some time or other get into possession of;
 that though they began with precepts of the
 greatest humanity and tenderness, and do-
 ing the utmost good to mankind, though of
 ever so different persuasions, as it is necessary
 for them to do who design a new Religion,
 in opposition to Religions already established;
 yet when people should be drawn in by
 these plausible pretences of humility and
 charity and disregard to present things, and
 by the appearances of these virtues in the
 first preachers of Christianity, they that fol-
 lowed might venture to throw off the masque
 and

and boldly to avow that spiritual tyranny and domination which the *Apostles* disclaimed: if, I say, any such thing as this should be insinuated, (as in fact it hath been †) the answer is easy, that we cannot, without the greatest absurdity, suppose that one generation of proud, ambitious, selfish, designing and worldly men should be willing to live poor and despised, and bear all manner of indignities and reproaches, without betraying the least desire of revenge, only that a few men of the same spirit and temper in following generations (but not of the same kindred, or even the same nation) might have an opportunity to gratify all their worst passions to the height. Men do not use to labour, merely that others (no more related to them than the most distant part of mankind) may enter into their labours. If they are desirous of wealth and power, they are desirous of them for themselves, or for those of their own family, and country, not for strangers, and that a very small part of the world may be able to lord it over the rest. And, as for *fame*, it would be a silly thing for any one to sacrifice his reputation while living to the hope of an uncertain and useless reputation after death; which the *Apostles* too, if they were such kind of men as this objection represents them, (*viz.* liars and impostors) had
no

† Christianity as old as the Creation, and the Characteristics.

no manner of reason to expect. “ Can they
 “ (saith the writer || I before mentioned,
 “ when he is pleading the cause of the *De-*
 “ *ists*, can they) if they have any concern
 “ for reputation after death, expect fair usage
 “ then, when they are sure to be belied
 “ while alive ?” If we should ask such ques-
 tions as these concerning the *Apostles*, the
 argument would not be merely *ad hominem*
 (as it is usually called ; that is, an argument
 not to be answered by him against whom it
 is made use of, because he cannot do it with-
 out contradicting his own principles and man-
 ner of reasoning) but would in itself be so-
 lid and conclusive ; for the *Apostles* of our
 Lord were, it is well known, ^a *hated of all*
men for his sake, as their Master had fore-
 told them they would be, (especially by such
 sort of persons as this writer instances in)
 and their followers ^b *a sect every where spoken*
against.

It could not therefore be *their own name*,
 nor any *empire and interest of their own*, but
 the *kingdom of Christ* that the *Apostles* labour-
 ed so unweariedly to promote, that he might
 reign in every *nation*, and in every *heart*.
 It was not *self-love* that was the spring of
 their activity, but the *love of Jesus*, from
 which extraordinary affection for their Lord
 and Master we may (considering what it
 cost

|| Author of the Address, &c.

^a Mat. x. 22.

^b Acts xxviii. 22.

cost them) infer, with some degree of assurance, that they stedfastly believed in him, and endeavoured to persuade the world of the truth of no other things than they were very well satisfied of themselves. For, if they had not believed that their Master was the *promised Messiah*, and his life and doctrine such as they represented it; had they not believed that he wrought undoubted miracles during his life, rose again from the dead, and ascended up into heaven; in a word, that he *came from God, and went to God*, instead of having any reason to follow him in his life-time, and much more to be fond of his memory, and attached to his cause after his crucifixion, so far as for his sake to part with all those things which are esteemed most valuable by the generality of mankind; instead of this, they would have had the greatest cause to detest him as an *impostor*, by whom they had been miserably befooled, and involved in difficulties and dangers, out of which they could have no way of escape but by forsaking the side they had chosen; and very justly would *Christ crucified* have been more a *stumbling-block* to them than to the other *Jews*, and greater *foolishness* than he was to the *Greeks* themselves. The *Apostles* therefore did really believe the truth of those things which they published concerning the doctrine of Christ, his life, and death, and resurrection, the mis-

sion

sion of the Holy Ghost as the effect and proof of his ascension to the right hand of God, and the revelations they delivered as from him; and if they believed the truth of these things, they knew them to be true, because these were not things which they received barely upon the report of others, but which they attested as matters of fact well known to themselves, and must consequently know to be false, if they were not certain of their truth.

The result is, that since it cannot be questioned that the *Apostles* had no other motive in being so zealously affected in the cause of Christianity, as they appeared to be, but their love to the blessed Jesus, and faith in him; besides the benefit of their example both to ministers and people, their conduct affords us an argument, next to demonstrative, of the truth of our Religion. Their whole history proclaims that they were not deceivers, (forasmuch as such persons have always some by-ends of their own to serve which the *Apostles* had not) and the nature and circumstances of the case prove that they could not be deceived; and if they were not deceived themselves, and did not knowingly deceive others, we are not deceived, when we believe on Christ through their word.

Having thus taken a view of the character in the text as exemplified most eminently,
and

and to the greatest degree of perfection, in the *Apostles* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, let us now pass on,

II. To consider the same excellent character as verified in the faithful Ministers of Christ, in every age of the church, and worthy of their highest ambition, and their utmost care to excel in it. There is no one who *serves God with his spirit in the Gospel of his Son* but may say for himself, in that capacity and relation, *to me to live is Christ*. But then we are to observe, that though all have purchased to themselves a good degree, in this respect, yet not the very same degree, (of which this single consideration is proof sufficient, that the *love of Christ* where it is equally sincere, is not equally strong) nor have any acquitted themselves so well, but they may be supposed capable of doing better. And, for this reason, I shall in my enlargement on this character take the liberty to mention some things which do not so properly belong to the *essence* of it, as to its *perfection*, and rather express what is to be *desired*, and what the Ministers of *Christ* should *labour after*, than what many of them have *actually attained to*. The main things which enter into this extensive character may be comprized under these three heads, viz. that every faithful Minister makes it the principal scope and business of his life to promote the

the honour and interest of his Redeemer, more particularly in the salvation of those souls that are committed to his charge—that in preaching the Gospel, and in all the other parts of his ministerial conduct and labours, he follows that method which he apprehends to be best adapted to the attainment of this glorious end—and, finally, that he esteems the approbation of his Lord, by whom he was bought, and is imployed, an ample recompence for all the discouragements and self-denial he can undergo in his service.

1. *A faithful Minister of Christ will make it the principal scope and business of his life to promote the honour and interest of his Redeemer, more particularly in the salvation of those souls that are committed to his charge.* I believe I need not add, that when we speak of the honour of Christ as the end of our ministerial labours, we are to understand it in connection with the glory of God, to which that of Christ as Mediator hath its ultimate reference. ^c *If every knee must bow to the name of Jesus, and every tongue confess that he is Lord,* it is to be done to the glory of God the Father, to whom ^d *glory is ascribed to be in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.* We do not here consider the *Word*, abstractly, ^e *that was in the beginning with God, and was God;* but

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^c Phil. ii. 10, 11. ^d Eph. iii. 21. • John i. 1, 2.

we consider *Christ* as the ^f *Word made flesh*, for the redemption of the world, as the ^g *anointed of God*, the *one mediator between God and man*, the ^h *one Lord*, and *head*, and *saviour of his body the church*; under which characters they for whom he mediates, the subjects of his kingdom, his redeemed ones, owe, and should delightfully pay him all the returns of praise and gratitude and love, the homage of their hearts, and the obedience of their lives.

We the Ministers of Christ are under special obligations to seek his honour and interest, in regard we are the *messengers of Christ*, his *servants* in a peculiar, and appropriate sense. And what is our message, but ⁱ *to beseech sinners in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God*? What is our office and employment but, like the angels though in a different way from them, to ^k *minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation*; and to do, in some sense, what the *fore-runner of the Messiah* did, ^l *make ready a people, prepared for the Lord*? To promote the Religion of the blessed Jesus both in the knowledge and practice of it, which is no other than the *kingdom of God among men*? To explain the method of reconciliation, and the blessings and terms of the Gospel covenant? To persuade those

^f John i. 14. ^g 1 Tim. ii. 5. ^h Eph. iv. 5.
 Col. i. 18. Eph. v. 23. ⁱ 2 Cor. v. 20. ^k Heb. i. 14.
^l Luke i. 17.

those who make a profession of Christianity to live agreeably to their profession, that they may be the *disciples of Christ indeed?* To be guides to others in the paths of *truth*, and *peace*, and *holiness*, and to assist them in acquiring all those divine virtues and qualifications which are necessary to prepare them for a part in the heavenly felicity? This is what we are to endeavour with the greatest fervency and application of mind. Not to teach men how to *dispute* and *wrangle*, but to *live well*; not to bring them over to any particular persuasion, and to contend blindly and fiercely for that, as if they must then be good Christians of course, but to gain them to Christ, and to the love of universal goodness. We must not ^m*preach ourselves*, but *Christ Jesus our Lord*. We must not suffer our humours and passions, our pride, and envy, and covetousness to mingle with and corrupt the *singleness* of our intention for the honour of the Redeemer, which ought to swallow up all these. We should abhor all private, or party views; be alike indifferent to our own secular interest, and to the interest of any sect or denomination of Christians whatsoever, any further than as by upholding and promoting that we consult the interest of Christ, and of true substantial Religion. For in reality, all other things, compared with this, are, whatever some may think, too

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incon-

inconsiderable to be worth minding, and much more to be worth our striving about them.

We are not to flatter the vices, or comply with the follies and humours of our people in things prejudicial to Religion, any more than to study how to gratify our own. We are, indeed, to please ⁿ *all men for their good, to edification*; but no man for fear of his displeasure, and to serve any little purposes of our own; for, if we thus please man, how are we the servants of Christ^o? In a word, if we seek glory, it must be that which flows from our being *workers together*^p with the Son of God in the recovery of a lost world. And, in truth, here alone, and in other instances of doing good, ambition is a virtue; here alone is it capable of meeting with satisfaction. It is a glorious thing to be employed by divine Providence in rescuing the lives and liberties of our fellow-creatures when in danger, to have *the blessing of those that were ready to perish come upon us*, to save men from bitter want, and lawless oppression. It is still more glorious to be an instrument of divine Grace in delivering souls from bondage and death, and conducting them, in the way of righteousness, to honour and immortality. Herein we at once act for ourselves, for the noblest interest of man-

ⁿ Rom. xv. 2. I Cor. x. 33. ^o Gal. i. 10.

^p 2 Cor. vi. 1.

mankind, for the honour of the Redeemer, and for the glory of God; for the cause of holiness is the cause of all these. In particular, we cannot serve Christ more acceptably than by being serviceable to the souls of men, to *instruct*, to *restore*, to *confirm*, to *edify*, and to *comfort* them. He himself hath made this the test of our love to him; ^a *Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter answering, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee*, he saith unto him, *feed my sheep*. He himself is the great lover of souls, for these *he laid down his life*^r; these are the *flock and church of God* which *he purchased with his own blood*^t, entrusting the care and oversight of them to us. When these are saved he *seeth of the travel of his soul and is satisfied*^t; and denonstrates the *power of his grace* in their conversion and final perseverance, as in *making his soul an offering for their sins*, he shewed the unparalleled greatness of his love.

2. *In preaching the Gospel, and in all the other parts of his ministerial conduct and labours, a faithful servant of Christ will think himself bound to follow that method which he apprehends to be best adapted to answer the glorious end now mentioned. And what is this method? Give me leave to be your remembrancer in a few things.*

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^a John xxi. 17.^t Acts xx. 28.^r John x. 11.^t Isai. liii. 11.

We are at proper times, and as our subject occasionally leads us, *to set the evidences of the Christian Religion* before our hearers; in the best and plainest manner we are able; that their faith may not be the mere result of education, but a reasonable and intelligent act, which, I will venture to say, is the faith which, being attended with a suitable life, does most honour to Christ in the view of the world, and is most becoming reasonable creatures, as men are.

We should take all opportunities of shewing them *the excellency of the doctrines and precepts of our holy Religion*, (which by the way, makes a part of the proof of its truth) and observing to them how admirably they all conspire in one great end, *viz. the glory of God and the perfection, and happiness of man*. It should be our endeavour to convince them of the *reasonableness* of those duties that are required of them, and the *goodness of God* in requiring them; leading them to take notice how all those rules of behaviour which *Reason* hath, or with due care might have found out, are delivered with much greater advantage in the *sacred writings*; and that whatever duties and appointments are peculiar to the Christian Institution, they are not therefore arbitrary unreasonable injunctions, but either naturally arise out of those circumstances which we are in, as fallen creatures

tures restored by the mediation of Christ to an assurance of the full favour of God, and everlasting blessedness, (such as *faith* and *trust* in the *Mediator*, and *love* to him) or are excellently fitted, as means, to facilitate the practice of moral and christian virtues, and our continual progress and improvement in them, of which kind the *Lord's-Day* and the *Lord's-Supper* are eminent instances. It is thus we are most likely to bring men to that obedience of the Gospel which will be uniform and constant, delightful to themselves, acceptable to God, and for the credit of their Religion, and its divine Author. It became Christ as a *lawgiver* to *teach with authority*, letting men know what God required of them, and what they, according to their behaviour might expect from God, without entering into the particular reasons of his commands, and proving the divine original of his doctrine from a distinct consideration of its nature and tendency, though he himself hints at this. And much the same method is taken in those sacred writings by which the christian revelation is conveyed down to us. The doctrine they contain is perfectly *reasonable*, but there is very little *reasoning* upon it. This part is left to those who are only the *expounders* of the *scripture-revelation*, and who owe it to the *author of their faith*, to the *faith itself*, and to *them that believe*, to

trace and mark out those footsteps of the *divine holiness, wisdom, and goodness* that are so conspicuous in the frame of our Religion.

We should be very careful also to preach nothing but the *pure uncorrupted doctrine of Jesus Christ*; not mixing what is *human* and sometimes worse, with what is *divine*. No good man will knowingly do this, but he may do it through inadvertency, and prepossession. He may have his favourite opinions which he never thoroughly tried by the standard of scripture; he may have taken things too much upon trust, and substituted the interpretations of scripture by fallible men in the room of the scripture doctrines themselves. Hath he *searched the scriptures diligently*, and that he might have *the mind of Christ* in them? Hath he laid aside all prejudice, as far as the weakness of human nature in this state of imperfection will admit of it? Hath he proceeded with the same care, and in the same method, in order to come at the right meaning of the *inspired scriptures*, that are used in settling the sense of other authors, especially those that are *antient*, *viz.* considering the occasion, scope and connection of the discourse, comparing one part with another, making plainer and more numerous passages the rule by which to understand those that are more obscure, and fewer; and finally, judging of the exact import of expressions and phrases
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by the customs that obtained when and where the books were written, and the idioms or manners of speaking which the writers followed; and not according to the weight and value which they would bear in our times and language; which *one rule* is of such importance that, if it had been always observed I much doubt some opinions had never been heard of which make a considerable figure in many *modern Systems of Divinity*? If he hath neglected this, he hath not discharged his *whole duty* in this particular. Not that we are, without any reason for it, to suspect the truth of those things which we have been taught; and much less to think the worse of them because they are commonly taught and believed. But if on the one hand we ought not to suspect received opinions without reason, no more ought we, on the other, to persist in the belief of them without it; when we have the *Bible* in our hands and, after we have taken the best care we can to understand that sacred Book, shall be better able to judge, (for ourselves I mean) which among the several contending parties of Christians come nearest to their common rule; or at least shall be justified to our own minds, and to the truth, if it should prove that we have judged wrong; always remembering, that a pure and humble mind equally remote from every extreme, is the best prepared for finding out the truth, and
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for teaching it when found; and that together with these commendable dispositions of mind we ought to join our earnest prayers to the *Father of lights* for his heavenly illumination; which, perhaps, *we* have somewhat more reason to expect than other men, as well as to be more sollicitously concerned about it; because not only our own personal conduct, but that of others may in some measure depend upon the notions we entertain. If a *private christian* be in an error, it is not of so much consequence, as long as it hath no ill effect upon his life, and so goes no further than a mistake in his own thoughts; while a *Minister*, whose integrity we will suppose secures him from the pernicious influence of an erroneous opinion, may, by propagating that opinion, *undesignedly* lead others into some wrong practice, or confirm them in it, who have not the same honest disposition that he himself hath.

That we may be more cautious how we advance any doctrines, without examining whether they are a part of the true *original scheme* of Christianity, let us consider, that while we tie ourselves down to any *human Creeds* and *Confessions*, and *Chatechisms*, it is very possible that some part of what we are building upon the common *foundation* may be only *hay and stubble* ^u, not, what we take it for, *gold and silver*; and that in this case though

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^u 1 Cor. iii. 12, &c.

we ourselves may be saved, having meant well, yet *our works shall be burnt up*; and we go without that *praise from God* which we should have had, if we had sought his will more at his own mouth, whether we had, or had not, always taken it right. The closer we keep to the purity and simplicity of the Gospel, so much the more good is the Gospel, in our hands, likely to do; as that food and medicine is most wholesome which hath nothing foreign and improper mixed with it. And I leave it to be considered, whether one way of preserving the simplicity of *scripture-doctrines* may not be, either not to depart from the *language* in which the *Holy Ghost* hath seen fit to deliver them; or, when we do, to express ourselves in the most *intelligible* words, and nearest resembling the simplicity of the scriptures; studiously avoiding the obscure *terms*, and perplexed and subtil *distinctions*, and endless *questions* of the *schools*, which are of no profit, but to the subverting of those that deal in them.

Again, if we would be like *St. Paul*, we must not *shun to declare the whole counsel of God*; for so he saith of himself, that he did not, in his most instructive and moving discourse to the *Elders of Ephesus*. And what this means is best explained by another expression in the same discourse, that he had not kept back any thing that was profitable for them, testifying to the *Jews*, and also to the
Greeks,

Greeks, *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*^w. Let this be our rule. Let us always consider what is *profitable* for our hearers; of which kind we may be sure every thing is that is a part of *repentance towards God*, and of that *faith in our Lord Jesus Christ* without which no man can be saved. Nothing of this nature should be withheld upon any account whatsoever. Nothing that is necessary to *faith*, and *holiness* should be left unexplained and unenforced; for this would be one way of ^x *handling the word of God deceitfully*, suppressing that part of it which would be unacceptable, and ^y *speaking only smooth things*; at most, contenting ourselves with general invectives against sin, and exhortations and persuasives to a holy life, without doing any thing to disturb that false peace in which so many souls lull themselves asleep to their own undoing; by which means, instead of ^z *commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God*, we should only get in favour with their lusts. This maiming the word of God is next a-kin to adulterating it, and of almost as fatal consequence to the souls of men. As for *doubtful opinions*, they should be always given for what they are, and seldom have any place in our Discourses. And where things are of *less importance*, how well!

^w Acts xx. 20, 21. ^x 2 Cor. iv. 2.

^y Isai. xxx. 10. ^z 2 Cor. iv. 2.

well persuaded soever we may be in our own minds of their truth, they should not have more stress laid upon them than they will warrant, nor be *violently* and *unseasonably* urged upon those who are in contrary opinions; but *insinuated* by little and little as they can bear, it being a maxim of *christian* as well as worldly *prudence*, that *the end is always to regulate the means*; and consequently, the end of our preaching being ^a *the profit of many that they may be saved*, we ought to avoid whatever would deprive us of this most desirable fruit of all our labours.

In the *manner* of preaching that way is undoubtedly to be preferred which is best suited to *enlighten the understanding*, and to *affect*, and *reform the heart*; such a *plainness of speech*, such an *easy*, and *apparent method* in dividing a Discourse, such a *familiar way of reasoning*, as will shew that we do not neglect the *meanest* of our hearers; and withal, such a *decency*, *propriety*, and *justness* as cannot be condemned by the most judicious.

And now I would ask, what further is necessary to the *preaching of Christ*? For my part, I freely own that I can understand nothing else *by preaching of Christ* than preaching the *Religion of Christ*, as it hath been now explained. If we consider Christ as the Author of our Religion, we cannot any other way give men so high a notion of him as
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^a 1 Cor. x. 33.

by teaching them to conceive most honourably of that ; which, I hope, is not done by telling them that the *doctrines* and *precepts* of the Gospel are irreconcilable to *Reason*, and overthrow all our natural notions of things ; but, on the contrary, by proving that no man who makes a right use of his *Reason* can refuse his assent to the *Christian Revelation*, or find fault with it ; its *precepts* having so manifest a tendency to secure the happiness of mankind, and its *doctrines* to give weight and efficacy to its *precepts* ; and neither of them being unworthy to come from the fountain of all truth and perfection. And what then should set some men so much against the use of *Reason* in Religion, and be the ground not only of their seeming contempt, but real hatred and dread of it ? Besides a consciousness that their notions will not bear this trial (I do not mean only of *Reason separate from Scripture*, but of *Scripture itself* interpreted by those *rules* which common *Reason* directs to) other causes might be given of this ; among which we may reckon these two following, *viz.* that the fanciful and mystical way of preaching, in which *any doctrine* may be fetched out of *any text*, is at the same time the easiest for the preacher and most acceptable to the generality of hearers ; and that *the work of conversion*, as they explain it, is of such a nature, that *Reason* and *Consideration* have little

tle or no real influence upon it; tho', by the way, the excellency of the Christian Religion does not consist only in the excellency of its *end*, the *glory of God in the restoration of man to his image and favour*, but likewise of the *means* employed for the accomplishment of this *end*; as the excellency of these means must appear in their proper subserviency to the end designed by them, and not barely in their being the *condition* without which God will not work grace in the soul. It is very true, *the excellency of the power* is more visibly of God when the means contribute nothing to the effect; as in the instance of the blind man, in curing whom our blessed Saviour did nothing but ^b *anoint his eyes with clay*, after he had spit upon it: but as we cannot therefore say that clay and spittle are an excellent remedy for blindness, so neither would it be proper to say of the Faith of the Gospel that it is an admirable means of purifying the heart, and making men *partakers of a divine nature*, if an *immediate and irresistible* operation of the *Holy Spirit* did *all*, and *faith*, as a *moral cause* or *motive*, did *nothing*. And if it be granted, that there is a real sanctifying virtue in the Gospel, under the influences of the Holy Spirit, this virtue must proceed from a fitness in the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel to beget in us the love of God, and of those qualities and actions that will render us like God;

^b John ix. 6.

God ; which love must be the effect of a conviction that the things which the Gospel ascribes to God as adorable perfections, and requires of man in order to his resembling God, are in their own nature lovely and excellent. Even the *promises* and *threatenings* of the Gospel do not, perhaps, so *directly* influence the conversion of the heart to God, and our endeavours after holiness ; but rather *indirectly*, as they work upon our passions, and thereby engage us to consider more seriously and attentively than we should otherwise do, the reasonableness of religion, the intrinsic value and native beauty of holiness, and great excellence of all those divine and spiritual attainments which Christianity obliges us to aspire after.

And since Christ is the glorious subject of the Gospel revelation as well as the divine author of it, he that goes over all the parts of this revelation, and those ofteneft which are most essential, and useful, cannot avoid frequently speaking of *Jesus Christ*, his *Person* and *Offices*, his *Life* and *Death*, his *Humiliation* and *Exaltation*, together with his most *astonishing affection* to the children of men manifested in all these ; and, if he loves his Subject, he will discourse of these things with pleasure, take every opportunity of returning to them, fix his admiring thoughts upon them, and recommend them to the meditations of others ; press the duties of the christian life from these motives, and not fail

to take notice of the end of all that Christ did, and suffered, and taught upon earth, and is now doing in heaven, namely, to turn men from sin to holiness, and, by faith and holiness, unto God. If there be any who are not contented with all this, but will needs have more, tho' not contained in scripture, at least according to our notion of things, and even inconsistent with the doctrine taught there, we must beg their excuse, if we do not leave our own way for theirs, till we see better reason for it. We readily agree with them, that he is the best *Preacher of Christ* whose way of preaching is best fitted to convince men of their *need of Christ*, and to bring them to *trust* in him, and depend upon him for *grace* and *glory*, and to *esteem* and *love* him. But then no serious christian will think that man to have a regular trust in Christ, who trusts him for what he never promised, and even against the constant tenor of his promises and declarations; or that he hath a true esteem and love of Christ, who, while he talks in a high strain of the loveliness of his *person*, neglects to imitate the virtues of his *divine life*; and, instead of ^b *keeping his commandments*, which is the rule that Christ himself hath given us to judge of our love by, is in raptures to think that Christ hath left *nothing* for *some men* to do, but confidently to believe that he hath done

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^b John xiv. 21.

all for them. Unhappy souls, who have *so* learned Christ; so as St. Paul tells the *Ephesians* ^c they had *not* learned him, if they had been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus. The *Ephesians* had not learned Christ, so as to be guilty of the immoralities ^d which the *Apostle* had before mentioned; which they will do well to consider, who fancy themselves to have learned Christ better than other people, and to have a better notion of *justifying faith*, because they have a more contemptible one of *good works*.

In the other parts of his ministerial office and conduct, the person I am now describing will take care that all things in the worship of God ^e be done *decently and in order*. In *Prayer* and the *Administration of the Sacraments*, he will be desirous of performing his part so as to secure the reverence due to the institutions and offices of Religion, and to excite and keep up a spirit of piety, and a *sober rational* devotion. He will also frame his behaviour at other times and places, as well as *in the house of God*, after such a manner, that the prejudices too commonly taken up against Religion may be removed, and he may gain a place in the affections of those that know him both for *himself* and *that*. He will consider that as it is his duty earnestly to exhort men to a holy and heavenly life, to
a con-

^c Eph. iv. 20, 21.

^d Ver. 17, 18, 19.

^e 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

a contempt of the world, and the greatest sincerity and simplicity in all their actions, and to use all the arts of persuasion for the effecting this end, so he cannot be dispensed with from being *an example to the flock* of these and all other christian virtues, without which, nothing that he can say will be much regarded. He will, in a particular manner, reflect on the answer of our blessed Saviour to that question, *who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?* Not the most wealthy, or powerful, or learned; not those who can easiest carry any point by their arts of managing the people, but the most humble; *whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.* He will not ^s strive, but be gentle to all men, apter to teach and reason, than, where argument fails, to supply the place of it with uncharitable censures; *in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth.* Observe, it is said, *if God will give them repentance,* that is, if the methods which God hath appointed will work repentance, not if they may be made to repent of their errors by being made to suffer for them. After all, *charity is the greatest friend of truth, and truth of charity.* Truth is soonest found by the charitable, were it only for this rea-

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^f Mat. xviii. 1, 4. ^s 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

son that they have a greater openness of mind than other men; and the charitable have usually most success in defending the cause of truth.

3. *A faithful Minister will esteem the approbation of his Lord, that bought him, and by whom he is employed, an ample recompence for all the discouragements and self-denial he can undergo in his service.* Great things he must neither seek, nor expect, (in this world I mean, where indeed the greatest things are but little to a great mind, and in comparison of the infinitely greater things above) difficulties and opposition he may and must expect without seeking. The stated and ordinary duties of his function, to be rightly performed, will cost him much care and watchfulness and pains, tho' his love to Christ, and to the souls of men will make his work much easier than it would otherwise be; and, perhaps, after all his prayers and labours, he may have little success. The weaknesses and mistakes of good men themselves may occasion him some trouble, and the obstinacy and blindness of others who hate to be reformed a great deal more. He may lose the friendship of some by those very things which ought to fix him the deeper in their esteem; they may become ^h *his enemies because he tells them the truth.* He may be evil spoken of, and faults found with his *preaching*, his *temper,*

^h Gal. iv. 16.

per, his conversation. When this is the case, he should be so much his *own friend* as to examine whether he hath given any ground for these censures, and to deal sincerely with himself, not justifying or sparing any faults because they are his own. But if, allowance being made for the common failings of humanity, he stands acquitted to his own mind, he need not doubt of his being accepted of Christ, *who judgeth not as man judgeth.* It is enough that his Saviour hath promised that he *will be with his faithful servants in the ministry* ⁱ *to the end of the world*; it is enough that he will ^k *stand by them and strengthen them*; and in the last general assembly will pronounce that welcome sentence, ^l *well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

III. Let us now, in the last place, consider this character as that by which all the genuine professors of the Gospel are at present distinguished, and will hereafter be known, from all others. The time will allow me to do little more than just give you a few hints on this subject.

M m 3

I. *They*ⁱ Mat. xxviii. 20.^k 2 Tim. iv. 17.^l Mat. xxv. 21.

I. *They reckon themselves obliged to devote all their talents, their wealth, power, interest, to the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world.* Christ to them is *all*; and therefore *their all* is laid at the feet of Christ. Whatever influence they have in their own families, in the civil society, or in the church of God, they are pleased with it chiefly on this account that it gives them an opportunity of supporting and countenancing true Religion and Virtue; as well knowing that what they do for these is so much done for their Redeemer; that he puts it on his account, and will repay it, although he might say unto them, *that they owe him their own selves.* O how were it to be wished that all the professors of the Gospel were of this spirit; and that true christians did not sometimes forget themselves, and their Saviour, and suffer their zeal to be too much damped by the world, and the bad examples they meet with in it! St. Paul complains of a coldness that had seized some christians among whom he conversed, who ^m *sought their own things and not the things of Jesus Christ.* I fear, the same witness would be as true of a great many now as it was then. May I not say, of many more, and in a much greater degree?

We have had *Inquiry upon Inquiry concerning the Decay of the Dissenting Interest, and the Causes of it.* Not to ask in what respects this

this Interest is less flourishing than it *hath been*, which is the thing meant by the *Decay* of it, no one will deny that it is not so flourishing, on more accounts than one, as it *might be*. And where shall we lay the fault of this? On Ministers only? And from whom are we to expect the remedy? Wholly from them too? The former would not be doing them justice; and the latter would be doing them too much honour. God grant that wherein soever Ministers have been defective in their duty, or done any thing to the disservice of Religion (as particularly in contributing to destroy, or not contributing as they ought to have done to preserve and cultivate, that *unity and affection* on which both the credit and the strength of any religious interest do so much depend) they may seriously think of it, mend what hath been amiss, and be wiser for the time to come. But after Ministers have taken their share of the blame, there will I doubt, be more than enough left for the People too. Let those that are concerned lay their hands on their hearts, and say, whether they have not grown cold and indifferent to *Nonconformity*, and in some company been ashamed to be known for *Dissenters*, only because the *favours and preferments*, of the world, and *publick fashion* are not on this side; and whether they do not think that others have forsaken us quite, for no other reason than this? The duty of such persons

is to mortify their love of the world, and to make it a rule to themselves (according to the laudable resolution of a very worthy man) *never to do that for preferment, or any temporal consideration, which they would scruple doing without.* Let them consider, whether they have been so tender as they should of the reputation of such Ministers as have not had the happiness to please those *whose persons they have in admiration?* Whether they have not been too easy to receive impressions, and take up reports to their disadvantage, and, instead of promoting their usefulness, hindered it? Let them confess, whether in the several steps of life, and in the designs they form and pursue they are not more animated than they should be by private and present views, and abundantly less than they ought by a publick spirit, and the generous and divine temper of Christianity? Particularly, in their own alliances, or in the disposal of children in *trades and professions*, or in *marriage*, which is the first thing in question, the chief determining point? Is it *Religion* or the *World*? Do not too many, after they have instructed their children in their education to be careful of their souls in the first place, as good as tell them by having so little regard to this point themselves, that they should take no notice of what they have been taught? Do they not seem to think that no expences turn to less account than those which are laid

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laid out upon the occasions of charity and piety? I speak not of all; for, blessed be God, we have *some*, I trust *many*, eminent examples of another kind, by whom the credit of Religion is in some measure redeemed and its interest heartily espoused. These declare by their actions that nothing is so dear to them as the *name and honour of Christ*, and that where these are concerned they are determined to make every thing else stoop, that is of private consideration.

2. *The genuine professors of Christianity prove their claim to this character by placing most of their esteem and affection where they think they discern most of Christ.* By this measure they regulate their judgment both of *persons* and *parties*. They love their Redeemer in his image, and wheresoever they find that, they can respect and own it, though in those of very different persuasions from themselves. In imitation of their great pattern, they embrace all mankind with a love of *benevolence*, or good-will, and all that love Christ with a love of *complacency* and *esteem*, taking pleasure in their gifts and graces, and, with thankfulness to God, acknowledging the benefit of their examples. Among the different forms and denominations which unhappily divide the christian world, they take their lot with that which in their judgment comes nearest the *scripture model*, not entering however (unless it be without know-
ing

ing it, and when they are imposed upon by misrepresentations of persons and things) into a *party-spirit*, and into measures that are detrimental to the common interest of true Christianity. While they join in communion with this or that *particular church*, they do not forget that they are members of the *church catholick*, and indispensably bound to seek the general credit and prosperity of *that*. I hope it will not be imputed to any *side views* when I add,

3. *True christians will be taught by their regard to Christ what sort of respect and treatment they owe to his Ministers.* That as on the one hand they are not to build their faith on the *authority of men*, whatever opinion they may have of their knowledge and integrity, so on the other they are to *esteem* all faithful Ministers ^a *very highly in love for their work's sake*, and for *his sake* whose servants they are. Those that are *Pastors according to God's own heart* will be afraid of claiming a power over the understandings and consciences of men which they cannot exercise without invading the rights of the author of our faith, the *one Master* ° and *Law-giver*; nor others submit to without betraying the rights and liberties of the Christian Church. People are to judge for themselves; we always suppose this in appealing to the scripture for the truth of all that we deliver as
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^a 1 Thef. v. 13.

° Mat. xxiii. 8.

belonging to *faith* or *practice*; for to what purpose is this appeal made if people are not permitted to *search the scriptures*, to see whether things are so as they are represented? But then as long as a Minister keeps within his proper bounds, and appears to *watch for souls* as one that knows ^P *he must give an account*, he may reasonably expect not only the good wishes but the encouragement and assistance of all that are well affected to the cause of their common Lord. They ought in no case to weaken his hands, and by expressing a contempt for his person and ministrations, to lessen his capacity of doing good. Ministers being men of *like passions* and infirmities with others, the people should not raise their demands too high; especially, when they themselves so often need pardon for the defects they are guilty of in the duties of their several stations. Let them think of that of our Saviour, ^Q *with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.* Are the sentiments of your Minister in some things different from yours? Yet certainly, that which recommends him to the approbation of his *Lord and Master* ought not to deprive him of the esteem and affection of his *bearers*. Now, among other things, the diligence and care of a Minister to know *the mind of Christ*, and to preach nothing else but that, must make him stand higher in his favour; and therefore

^P Heb. xiii. 17.^Q Mat. vii. 2.

fore though the effect of this his pious endeavour should be his not agreeing in every point with *Established Systems*, this instead of giving his People, or any others, a worse notion of him should dispose them to weigh impartially what he hath to offer in his own defence, and (as it may prove) in the defence of the truth too; or to bear with him if after all they cannot be of his mind, as long as he shews himself one of a modest and peaceable spirit, and to act from conscience, and not from a levity of mind, or an affection of singularity.

And now, what remains but that we all of us resolve that by divine assistance we will make this character our own, and, by striving after an eminence in it, put it out of dispute that it is so, that to us *to live shall be Christ*; not barely to *talk*, but to *live*; that we will live to his *honour*, and be ready to die for his *truth*? And let us remember, that no one can pretend to this who leads an *unholy life*; which is at once an open contradiction to the *precepts* of Christ, to the *example* of his life, and the *design* of his death. A holy life is the greatest commendation to our Religion, and an unholy one (to those that judge of a Religion by the conversation and manners of its professors) the greatest reproach and disgrace. Let us, my brethren, whether Ministers or People, *consider one another, to provoke unto love,*

^r Heb. x. 24.

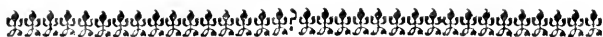
love, and to good works. Let us, as to the *spirit* of Piety, (whatever we may think of some of the *particular instances* in which it exprest itself) form ourselves upon the example of the *primitive christians*, of those who were the *first preachers*, and the *first professors* of the Gospel; and when we think of their zeal in the cause of Christianity which even *consumed them*, be ashamed to reflect on our own coldness and indifference. Let us further consider that we are *not our own, but bought with a price*; and that it is but reasonable, and what gratitude will oblige us to, to live to him who died for us. And finally, that if to us *to live be Christ*, then, and then only, *to die will be gain*; that we shall then be able with more confidence to commend our departing spirits into his hands, after we have proved the sincerity of our love to him in the whole course of our actions, and shall not be *ashamed before him at his coming*, as he will not be ashamed of us.

“ O most merciful Saviour, dwell in our
 “ hearts by faith, fill us with thy spirit, in-
 “ spire us with thy love! The *Seraphim*,
 “ thy heavenly ministers, are a *flame of fire*;
 “ so are all those pure and blessed spirits
 “ that dwell near the throne; so fain would
 “ we be too, amidst all our darkness and
 “ imperfections; so would we burn with
 “ love to our divine Master, so shine with
 “ his

“ his likeness, and serve him with the same
“ faithfulness and delight. Then we know
“ we shall never fall, never be disappointed
“ of our hopes, but *an enterance shall be*
“ *ministred to us abundantly into the everlast-*
“ *ing kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Je-*
“ *sus Christ.*”

The End of the FIRST VOLUME.





To be corrected.

PAGE 13. line 21. after they, put a period. p. 60.
l. 21. for and r. an. p. 95. l. 27. for is r. in.
p. 168. l. 2. for into r. in. p. 180. l. 29. for is r. in.
p. 183. last line, add ^f to the Note. p. 202. l. 31.
after alafs, put a comma. p. 256. l. 13. for preceps
r. precepts.

