



Library of the Theological Seminary,

PRINCETON, N. J.

Presented by

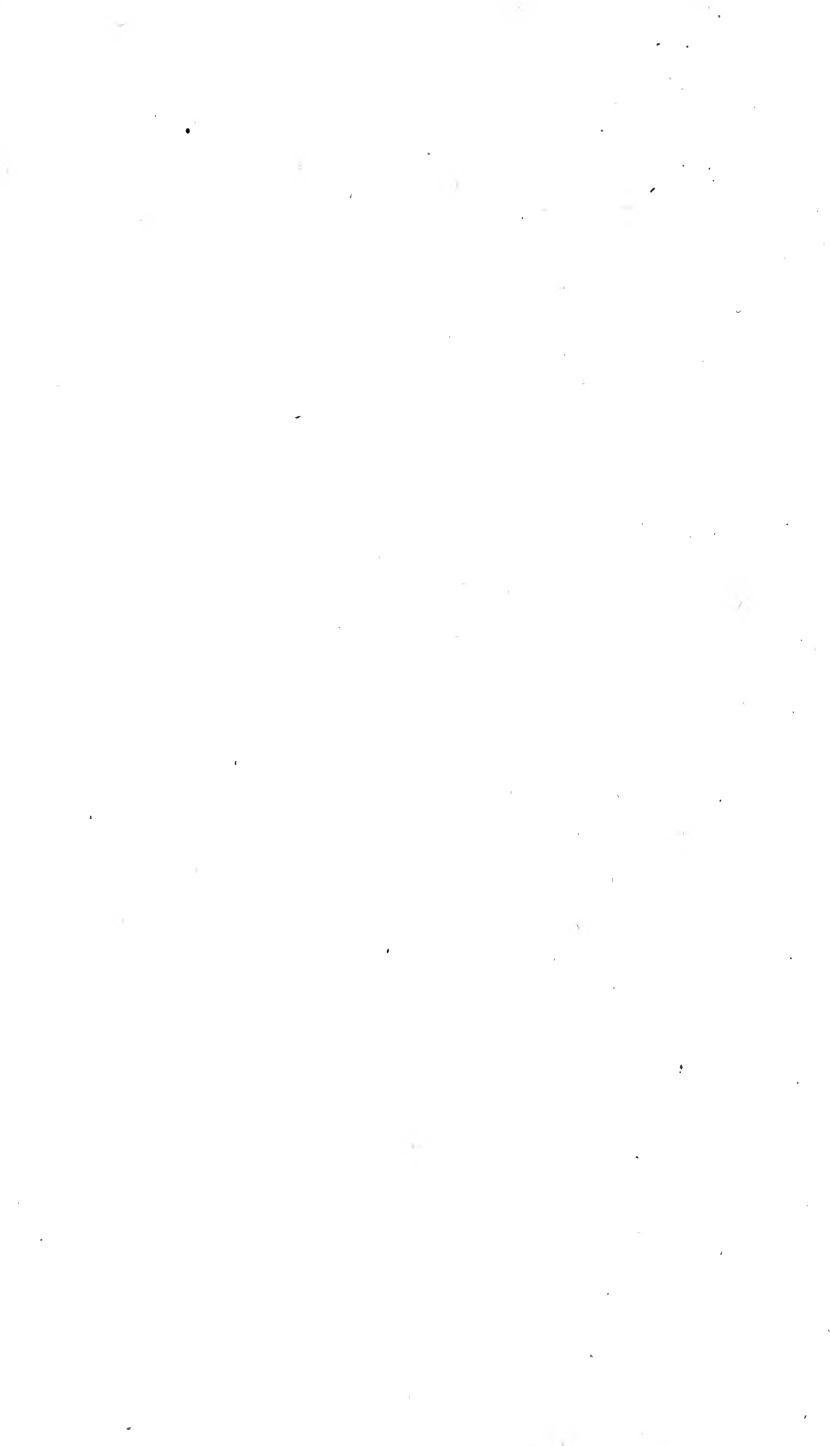
Division . . .

Section ...

Number.....

Shelf.....





DISCOURSES

O N

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

By the late REVEREND

JOHN LELAND, *D. D.*

With a PREFACE, giving some Account of the LIFE, CHARACTER, and WRITINGS of the AUTHOR.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

THE FIRST VOLUME.

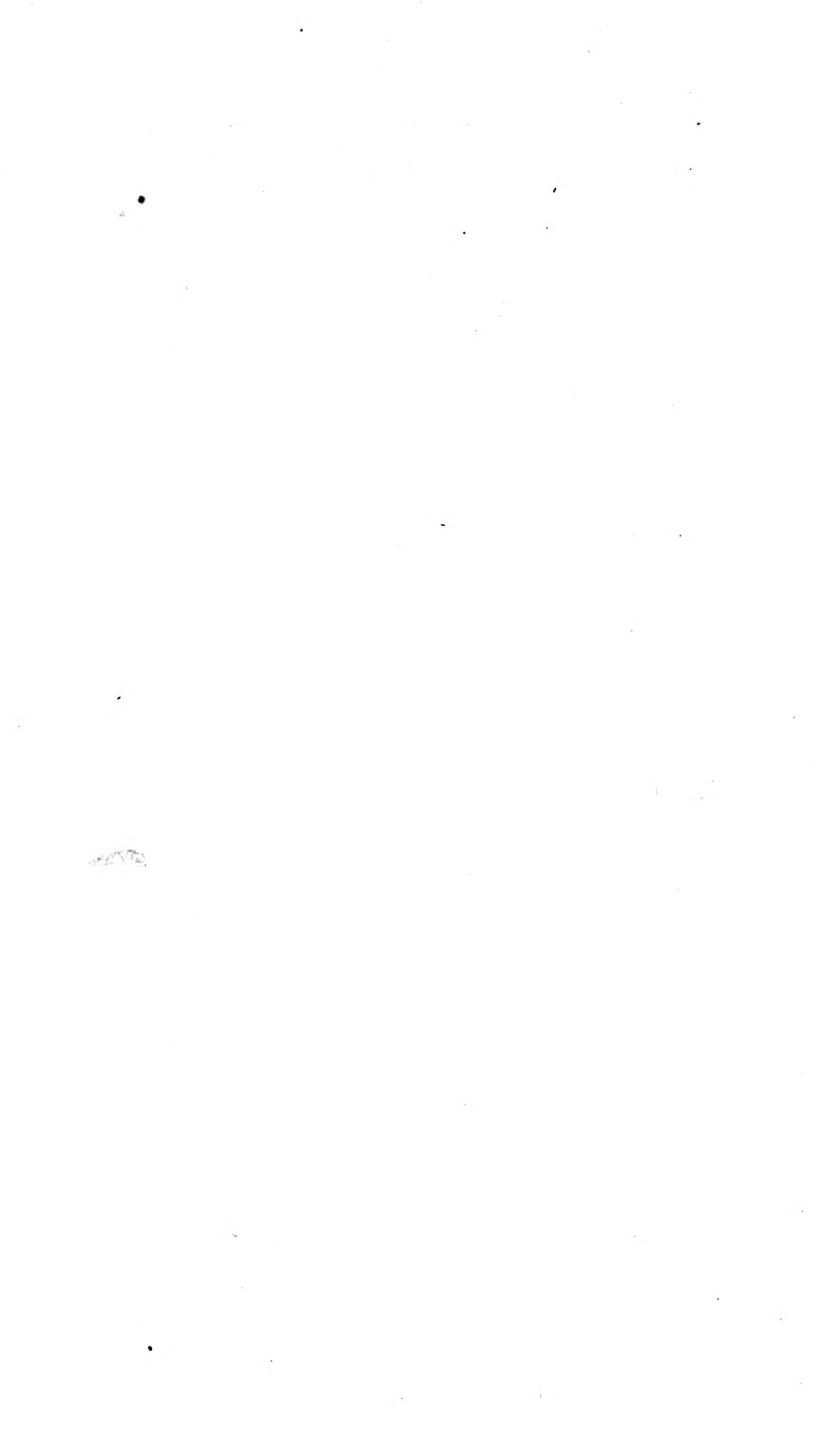
L O N D O N:

Printed for W. JOHNSTON, in *Ludgate-Street*;

A N D

J. DODSLEY, in *Pall-Mall*.

M D C C L X I X.



DISCOURSES

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

By the late REVEREND

JOHN LELAND, *D. D.*

THE FIRST VOLUME.

L O N D O N:

Printed for W. JOHNSTON, in *Ludgate-Street*;

AND

J. DODSLEY, in *Pall-Mall*.

M DCC LXIX.

S U B S C R I B E R S

TO THE LATE

REV. DR. LELAND'S SERMONS.

A.

HIS Grace the Archbishop of Armagh,
Primate of all Ireland

Lady Aultin

Michael Aigoin *Esq.*

Charles Allanson *Esq. of Bromham-Biggin*

David Aigoin *Esq.*

William Alcock *Esq.*

George Atkinson *Esq. of Marymount*

Miss Margaret Aigoin

Mr. William Alexander

Mr. Alexander Armstrong

Mrs.

S U B S C R I B E R S.

Mrs. Elizabeth Auften
Mr. Thomas Andrews
Mr. John Armstrong
Rev. Mr. Aftley
Mrs. Abney, *Stoke Newington*

B.

Right Hon. Lord Bingley, 3 Sets
Right Hon. Countess of Beftive
John Bowman *Esq. of Glasgow*, 8 Sets
Richard Bagshaw *Esq. of Oaks*
William Bridges *Esq.*
Thomas Barton *Esq.*
Sir Henry Bridgeman *Bart.*
John Bagwell *Esq.*
Patrick Blair *Esq. M. D.*
Rev. Mr. Bourne, *Rector of Ashover*
Rev. ——— Berkely, 2 Sets
Rev. Adam Blair
Rev. Samuel Bruce
Rev. Dr. Henry Barnard, *Rector of Abadonwey*
Rev. John Brekell, *of Liverpool*
Rev. Mr. Buckby, *Vicar of Sego*
Rev. Mr. Birch, *of Canterbury*, 2 Sets
Mr. Thomas Bond
Mrs. Anna Boswell
Mr. Samuel Baker

Mr.

S U B S C R I B E R S.

Mr. Thomas Brown
 Mr. J. Berkeley, *of Christ-Church Oxford*
 Rev. Mr. Buller, *Deputy Clerk of the Closet to
 her Majesty*
 Mrs. Elizabeth Benn
 Mr. Robert Maghlin Brownrigg
 Mr. Henry Betagh
 Mr. William Bagwell
 Mr. Archibald Barber
 Mr. Joshua Bourn
 Mr. William Bell
 Miss Dorcas Bagwell
 Mr. John Barton, *of Bourdeaux*
 Abraham Bradley *Esq.*
 Mr. Elias Brownsword

C.

His Grace Dr. Thomas Secker, late Lord
 Archbishop of Canterbury
 Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Clogher, 2 Sets
 Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Clonfert
 Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Corke
 Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Cloyne
 Hon. and Rev. Mr. Crosbie
 Richard Cooke *Esq.*
 Francis Carleton *Esq.*

Rev.

S U B S C R I B E R S .

- Rev. Mr. Chaife, *Minister of the French Church
at the Hague, Member of the Society of Sciences
at Haarlem and of the Dublin Society*
- Mr. ——— Cartin, *of Christ-Church, Oxford*
- Rev. Mr. Chidlaw, *of Chester*
- Rev. Hugh Crooks
- Rev. James Clugston
- Rev. James Caldwell
- Mr. Isaac Coffart, *of London*
- Mrs. Margaret Carleton
- Dr. Matthew Clark,
- Mrs. Mary Card
- Mr. William Colvill
- Mr. Robert Colvill
- Mr. William Campbell
- Mr. George Campbell
- Mr. Thomas Corles
- Mr. John Cowan
- Mr. James Cotter, *of Liverpoole*
- Mr. Charles Craig
- Mr. Ralph Card
- Mrs. Rachel Collins
- Miss Mary Cuthbert
- Mr. John Cuthbert
- Mrs. Creed
- Rev. Dr. Crene
- Rev. Mr. Cookson, *at Falkingham in Lincolnshire*

S U B S C R I B E R S.

D.

Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Down and Connor
Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Dromore
Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Derry
Rev. Dean of Dromore
Hon. Christopher Dawney *Esq.*
Jonathan Darby *Esq.*
William Dunn *Esq.*
Marriot Dalway *Esq.*
Rev. William Darby, *D. D.*
Rev. Benjamin Domville, *D. D.*
Mr. William Davenport
R. Dalton *Esq.*
Mrs. Grace Davis
Mr. Damer Darby
Mr. Charles Denroche
Mr. James Davidson

E.

Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Elphin
Edward Ellis *Esq. of Cornish, Flintshire*
Thomas Emerfon *Esq.*
Mr. George Eveleigh

Rev.

SUBSCRIBERS.

Rev. Mr. Endfield, *of Liverpoole*
Mr. Robert Edmonston

F.

Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Ferns and Loughlin
Thomas Fairfax *Esq. of Newtown Ryme, 6 Sets*
Rev. John Frank, *of Bath*
Rev. Andrew Ferguson, *of Burt*
Mr. James Frood
William Fortescue *Esq.*
Rev. Dr. Fountayne, *Dean of York*
Rev. Mr. Froome, *of Cricklade, Wiltshire*

G.

Mrs. Gage, *of Dublin*
Francis Gray *Esq.*
Rev. Dr. Gervais
Mr. Nathaniel Garner
Mr. Thomas Garner
Mrs. Abigail Garner
Mr. Thomas Gee
Mr. Arthur Guinness
Mr. Daniel Gellis
Rev. Dr. Griffith, *Rector of St. Mary Hill*
Rev. Mr. W. Gardner, *of Ramsgate*

H.

SUBSCRIBERS.

H.

Rev. Dr. Head, *Archdeacon of Canterbury*

William Harward *Esq.*

Alexander Hamilton *Esq.*

Hugh Henry *Esq.*

Joseph Henry *Esq.*

Richard Hall *Esq.*

John Hunt *Esq.*

Rev. William Henry, *D. D.*

Rev. Mr. Hawkes, *of Birmingham*

Rev. Mr. Howard, *of Ditto*

Rev. David Harvey, *of Londonderry*

Rev. David Hutchison, *A. M.*

Mr. John Hutchison, 2 Sets

Mr. Edward Hinehs, 2 Sets

Mr. Hugh Henry

Mrs. Henry

Miss Henry

William Hamilton *Esq. M. D.*

Mr. William Harding

Mr. Joseph Hone

Mrs. Hone

Mr. Hugh Henderson

Mr. Richard Hare

Mrs. Hardman, *of Ullerton*

Mr. John Hankison

Mr. John Hunt

S U B S C R I B E R S.

Mr. William Hunt
Lieutenant-General Hudson

I.

Mathew Jacob *Esq. of Mobarname*
Isaac Jobson *Esq.*
Rev. Mr. Jeffop, *of Lismore*
Rev. Mr. Jilliard, *of Skipton-Mallet*
Mr. Robert Jaffray
Mrs. Mary Johnston
Mr. Robert Jackson
Mr. William Jackson
Mr. Edward Jollie
Mr. William Jenkins
Mr. Thomas Jordan
Mr. William Johnston, 2 Sets
Mr. Charles Jennins
Rev. Mr. W. Jarvis, *Nailsworth, Gloucestershire*

K.

Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Kilmore
Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Kildare
Rev. Mr. Knowles, *Vicar of Ormskirk*
Mr. Alexander Kirkpatrick, 4 Sets
Mrs. Martha Kane

Mr.

S U B S C R I B E R S.

Mr. Robert King

Rev. Mr. Kitchingham, *Rector of Sasay, York-
shire*

L.

Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Limerick

Right Hon. Lady Langford

Thomas Litton *Esq.*

Richard Leland *Esq.*

Rev. Dr. Leigh, *of Hallifax, 5 Sets*

Rev. Edward Ledwich *D. D.*

Rev. Zachariah Langton *A. M.*

Mr. William Lightbody

Boynton Langley *Esq. of Wykeham Abbey*

Mr. Adam Lightbody

Mr. Robert Lightbody

Mr. Abraham Lane

Mr. James Lecky

Mr. William Laban

Mr. Samuel Laban

Mr. Joseph Litton *Jun.*

Mr Samuel Leland

Rev. Dr. Lloyd

Rev. Mr. T. Laugher, *Hummerton, 2 Sets*

M.

S U B S C R I B E R S.

M.

Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Meath
Hamilton M'Clure *Esq.*
Stephen Mills *Esq.*
George Martin *Esq.*
Lewis Martin *Esq.*
Robert Montgomery *Esq.*
Sir William Milner, of *Nun-Apple, Bart.*
David M'Bride *Esq. M. D.*
Robert Maxwell *Esq.*
Rev. Josiah Marshall, *Rector of Faban*
Rev. William Mackay
Mrs. Anne Minchin
Mr. Stephen Miller
Mr. Robert Montgomery
Mr. William M'Murtrie
Mr. Thomas Moulson, of *Chester*
Mr. Thomas M'Ilwaine
Mr. Edward Mockler
Mr. Morgan
Mrs. Alice M'Caffin
Mr. John Mount
Mrs. Catharine M'Clintock
Mr. Hugh Murphy
Mr. Robert Moore
Mr. James M'Mullan

Mr.

S U B S C R I B E R S.

Mrs. Marshall

Mr. George Maquay

Rev. Middleton Cornyn Middleton *L. L. D.*

N.

Rev. Moses Nelson *M. A.*

Mr. John Nicholson

Mrs. Elizabeth Newport

Mr. John Newcombe

Mr. Nehemiah Stokes

Rev. Mr. Noble

O.

Walter Osborne *Esq. of Ravensfield*

Rev. Dr. Obins, *Rector of Kay*

Mr. Robert Oakman

P.

Lady Sarah Poole

Rev. Dr. Potter, *Dean of Canterbury*

William Perry *Esq.*

Richard Perry *Esq.*

Peter

S U B S C R I B E R S.

Peter Paumier *Esq.*
Henry Palmer *Esq.*
Richard Pope *Esq.*
Rev. Michael Pope
William Patten *Esq. M. D.*
Rev. John Patten
Rev. Kene Percival *D. D.*
Mr. Robert Palmer, *of Cloghan*
Mr. Robert Palmer, *of Clareen*
Mr. Benjamin Page
Mrs. Phillips
Miss Perry
Mr. Thomas Page

R.

Rev. Dr. Randolph, *President of C. C. Oxford*
Thomas Read *Esq.*
Phineas Riall *Esq.*
Mrs. Mary Riall
Miss Ravaud, *of Bath*
Mr. Robert Rikey
Mr. Michael Raye
Rev. Mr. Richmond
Rev. Mr. Roberts, *Eton*

S U B S C R I B E R S.

S.

William Simpson *Esq. of Stawford*
Lindsey Simpson *Esq. of Babworth*
William Stewart *Esq. of Killymoore*
Rev. John Simpson, *of Stoke*
Rev. Mr. Sandoz, *of Waterford*
Rev. Anthony Stirling
Jacob Sankey *Esq.*
Mr. Richard Sankey
Mr. William Stewart
Mr. John Stewart
Mrs. Anne Stewart
Mrs. Stewart, *of Newtown*
Mr. John Swanwick
Mrs. Singleton
Mr. Robert Stevelly, *of Corke*

T.

Theophilus Thompson *Esq.*
Mr. David Thompson, 2 Sets
Mr. Edwin Thomas
Mr. Joseph Tarry

V.

S U B S C R I B E R S.

V.

Mr. Benjamin Vaughan
Samuel Vaughan *Esq.*
Mr. Benjamin Vaughan *Jun.*
Mr. John Vaughan
Mrs. Temperance Vize

W.

Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Winchester, 5 Sets
Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Waterford, 4 Sets
Matthew Weld *Esq.*
Colonel Robert Welch
Rev. Isaac Weld *D. D. of Dublin*
Rev. Edward Williams, *of Nottingham.*
Mrs. Elinor Weld
Mrs. Hannah Weld
Mrs. Anne Weld
Mrs. Sarah Weld
Mrs. Elizabeth Weld
Mr. William Walsh
Mr. Francis Wheeler
Mr. John Wheeler
Mr. James Watfon

Mr.

S U B S C R I B E R S .

Mr. Benjamin Winterbottom

Mrs. Dorcas Warren

Michael Woodhall *Esq.*

Rev. Dr. Wilson.



P R E F A C E.

THE Rev. Dr. *Leland* was born at *Wiggan* in *Lancashire*, the 18th of *October*, O. S. in the Year 1691. When he turned his Thoughts to the Place and Time of his Birth, he observed there were two Things for which he had great Reason to be thankful to Divine Providence. The one was his having been born in a Land of evangelical Light and Liberty.—The other, his having been born of religious Parents. Though it be very true, what some Persons have observed, that no Man shall be saved or condemned merely for being born in such a Country, or at such a Time, yet it cannot be denied, that there are some Ages and Countries eminently distinguished above others, and in which Persons have much greater Advantages for knowing and practising their Duty, and for making a Progress in all those Accomplishments, that tend to the true Dignity and Perfection of the human Nature. And any one that believeth a Providence, which superintendeth the Affairs of Men, ought to look upon it as a happy Circumstance, when his Birth and Habitation have been so ordered and disposed, as to give him great

a

Advantages

Advantages for religious and moral Improvements. He was therefore thankful to the Divine Providence, that he was born not among the wild *Indians*; not in the barbarous and uncultivated Nations, among whom the main Principles of what is called *Natural Religion*, are in a great Measure extinguished, and where human Nature is sunk into the lowest Degree of Meanness and Ignorance; nor yet in Countries groaning under *Turkish* Oppression; nor where the Christian Religion is debased with Superstition and corrupt Mixtures, which have greatly obscured and defaced its primitive Purity, Simplicity, and Glory; or where *Papal Tyranny* prevaleth, and where there is no Liberty allowed for an impartial Examination of the Scriptures, and keeping close to that sacred Rule.

Had our Author been to choose for himself in what Part of the World, in what Nation, in what Age, to come into Existence, he could scarce have desired any thing more favourable in these Respects, than it pleased God in his great Goodness to assign him. He thought he was born in one of the happiest Parts of the Earth, in a Country blessed with great Advantages, and in one of the brightest Periods that is to be met with in the whole Course of the English History. For in no Age nor Country was there ever a fuller Enjoyment of
Liberty,

Liberty, a more glorious Light, greater Advantages for Improvement, or better Opportunities for making a free Inquiry into the Nature and Reasons of the Christian Religion, and professing it in its Purity. This, he thought, ought not to be passed over with a slight Regard, but justly called for the most grateful Acknowledgments.

The other Thing he had to be peculiarly thankful for, in which he had an Advantage above many thousands in the same Age and Country, was his being born of religious Parents, Persons of true Christian Simplicity, and godly Sincerity.

To proceed from Parents distinguished by the Splendor of their Titles, and Affluence of their Fortunes and Circumstances, may indeed, in many Cases, open a Way for making a Figure in the World, and being extensively useful in the Community. But it often bringeth great Temptations along with it, which few are able to resist or overcome. But to spring from Parents of great Piety and Virtue, though of comparatively mean outward Circumstances, is a real and mighty Advantage. And the Benefit arising from their early good Instructions and good Examples, is superior to any Thing which worldly Riches or Honours can furnish: and to be in a great Measure exempted from those Temptations to which these Things generally expose

iv P R E F A C E.

Men, is often to be regarded as an happy Circumstance.

His Father was full of Zeal for God, very assiduous in the Exercises of Piety and Devotion, in his Closet and Family, as well as in attending on public Worship, and his whole Conversation was uniform and exemplary. His Circumstances in the World were such for several Years, that, though not opulent, he lived in very good Credit, and was very active in doing Good, according to his Ability. At length, by several Disappointments in his Affairs, and especially through his being involved by becoming Security for some Friends, he was brought under such Difficulties, that he gave all his Effects into the Hands of his Creditors, and came over into *Ireland*, being obliged to leave his Wife and Children in her Father's House at *Wiggan*, where she continued two Years till his Death. And then her Husband having got into a Prospect of being settled in Business, she came to *Dublin* with three Sons, of whom our Author was the second. It is natural to suppose, that in his Circumstances he must have suffered much Distress with a Wife, and three Children very young, in a strange Land, and known to very few. But he bore all with great Chearfulness, and, diligent in his Business, had a steady Dependence on Divine Providence. It was usual

P R E F A C E. v

usual with him to rise up early to his Employment : but he never did, under Pretence of Business, neglect his Devotions to God in his Closet, or in his Family. He delighted to speak of religious Subjects, and he did it with such Warmth and Affection, as shewed how nearly they touched his Heart : and what recommended his Discourse was, that his whole Conduct was agreeable to it. His Life was a constant Course of honest Industry, great Temperance, Patience, Meekness, Delight in God, and cheerful Resignation to his Will. And his End was suitable to such a Life, without any Cloud or uncomfortable Doubts and Fears. He triumphed over Death, without vain-glorious Boasting, but with a calm, steady, well-grounded Hope of Glory, that raised him above the Fears of Death, and gave him some Foretastes of Glory, before he entered into it.

Our Author's Mother was also one of great Piety as well as Knowledge, and of good natural Parts, excellent in the Oeconomy of her Children and Family, and very diligent and careful in all the Duties of a faithful Wife and affectionate Mother. She died some Years before her Husband, and her End was also very comfortable and edifying.

When he reflected on the Character and Conduct of his beloved Parents, " How

vi P R E F A C E.

“ thankful,” said he, “ should I be to God,
“ for the Benefit of their early good In-
“ structions, and useful Examples, and fer-
“ vent Prayers, in which respect I have
“ had a mighty Advantage above many
“ thousands, whose outward Circumstances
“ were much more splendid !”

In the sixth Year of his Age, he was seized with the Small-pox, which proved of so malignant a kind, that his Life was despaired of. And when, contrary to all Expectation, he recovered from that Disorder, he was found deprived of his Understanding and Memory, the Use of which, it was much feared, would never have been restored. This State of Stupidity continued for near twelve Months. His former Ideas seemed all quite expunged. And though before the Distemper he had been taught to read, all was intirely forgotten, and he was obliged to begin with the Letters, as if he had never known them before. But though he could never recover the Remembrance of what had happened to him before he was seized with that Distemper, he discovered now a quick Apprehension, and strong Memory : and the Progress he made was taken so much Notice of, that his Parents, by the Advice of Friends, resolved to breed him to a learned Profession.

Accordingly he applied himself to School Learning with remarkable Assiduity, in which

he made a quick Progress; as also in a Course of Philosophy, under a celebrated Teacher at that Time. His unwearied Diligence, and great Proficiency in Learning, were much taken Notice of, and admired by all who knew him. After this he applied himself to the Study of Hebrew and Divinity, under the Direction of some learned and worthy Ministers, who greatly assisted him in his Studies: and, in due Time, being thoroughly satisfied how well furnished and prepared he was, encouraged him to enter into the Ministry. And he fully answered the high Expectations which were formed of him. For he had not long appeared in that Character, till he came to be much esteemed, even by the most discerning Judges: and was invited to preach stately to the Congregation of *Protestant Dissenters*, then meeting in *New-Row*, with a View to a further Settlement. His Sermons were so acceptable, and his Behaviour was so becoming, that in a short Time he received from them a most affectionate and unanimous Call to be Joint-pastor with the Rev. Mr. *Nathaniel Weld*, and was solemnly ordained the 13th of *December* 1716.

Before he took this Character upon him, he applied himself in the most serious and deliberate Manner to consider the Nature and Duties of that sacred Office; even that of a Minister and Pastor in the Church of

Christ, a Presbyter, or a Bishop; for it appeared to him, upon the most accurate Examination, that in the Times of the Apostles, these Names were used indifferently to signify the same Order of Church-Officers; though he was sensible, that soon after there began to be a Distinction made between them.

And he looked on the sacred Ministry as a Station, not only of Honour, but of Labour; that it is not an idle Life, to be spent in Ease and Indolence, but in active useful Service. That, as it is evident from many Passages of the New Testament, it is the Will of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, the great King and Head of his Church, that Christians should be formed into worshipping Societies, for the Purposes of his Religion, so he hath appointed that there should be Persons peculiarly set apart to the Work of the Ministry among them, whose proper Office it should be to preside in those sacred Societies, to teach and instruct, to exhort and admonish the Christian People, to lead them in divine Worship, to administer sacred Ordinances among them, and exercise a pastoral Care over them. That the great End of their Ministry is, in general, this, to promote the Glory of God in the Salvation of Souls, and thereby advance the Interests of Christ's Kingdom: that to that End they are to labour in the
Word

Word and Doctrine, to preach Repentance and Remission of Sins in the Name of Christ, and to beseech Sinners to be reconciled unto God. That they are to publish the glad Tidings of Salvation, to display the great and precious Promises of the new Covenant, and its most reasonable and gracious Terms, to set their Duty before them in its just Extent, and to enforce the Laws of the Gospel, by its powerful and engaging Motives, and important Sanctions : that they should take *St. Paul* for their Model, who in the Account he gives of his own Ministry, in his admirable Speech to the Elders of the Church of *Ephesus*, solemnly declares, and appeals to them for the Truth of it, that he had *kept back nothing that was profitable unto them, but had shewed them, and taught them publicly, and from House to House, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, Repentance towards God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.* Acts xx. 20, 21. He tells the *Corinthians*, that he and the other Apostles, preached *Christ crucified*, and that he *determined not to know any thing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* And elsewhere he declares, that he *preached not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord.* He observed, that from these and other Passages to the same Purpose, we may see, what ought to be the main Topics that Gospel Ministers should

x P R E F A C E.

should insist upon in their preaching. They are to preach Christ crucified, to teach whatsoever he hath commanded them, his Doctrines and his Laws; to explain sacred Truth, and urge all religious and moral Duties in the Reference they bear to him, as the great Foundation and Center of our Religion as Christians.

He observes, that as to the Manner of their preaching, they “ must not corrupt the
“ Word of God, nor handle it deceitfully,
“ but as of Sincerity, but as of God, in
“ the Sight of God, must speak in Christ.
“ They must speak as becometh the Ora-
“ cles of God. In their Doctrine they
“ must shew Incorruptness and Gravity,
“ and sound Speech that cannot be con-
“ demned. They must be Workmen that
“ need not be ashamed, rightly dividing
“ the Word of Truth. They must not
“ use flattering Words, nor seek Glory of
“ Men; nor Excellency of Speech, entic-
“ ing Words of Man’s Wisdom”. They
must faithfully warn the wicked of the
Evil of his Way, and must speak the
Truth boldly, and rebuke with Authority.
But they ought to manage their Rebukes
with great Prudence and Meekness. They
are “ not to rebuke an Elder, but intreat
“ him as a Father, and the younger Men
“ as Brethren”. They must endeavour to
adapt their Discourses to the various Cases

of

P R E F A C E. xi

of their Hearers, giving Milk to Babes, and Meat to stronger Men; using the most indulgent Care, and being gentle among them, as a Nurse cherisheth her Children. And in all this they should be diligent, ceasing not to warn every one Night and Day, in the most affectionate Manner. And the Motives they are acted by should be simple and pure. Knowing the Terrors of the Lord, they should persuade Men. And the Love of Christ should constrain them. They should not seek to please Men, but study to approve themselves in the Sight of God: And they should have the most tender Regard to the Good of Souls. This should animate their Preaching, and their whole Conduct. *St. Paul* frequently expresseth himself on this Subject in the most affectionate Strains, as particularly in the first Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, the second and third Chapters throughout. How doth he exult and triumph in the Success of the Gospel, when the Christian Converts abounded in Faith and Love and the Fruits of Righteousness! And, on the contrary, how is he concerned and grieved when they did not answer his Desires and Expectations! He was ready to spend, and to be spent; nay he rejoiced to offer himself a Sacrifice for the Service of their Faith. *Phil.* ii. 17.

That in order to fit them for the right
Dis-

xii P R E F A C E.

Discharge of their Duty, they ought to give heed to Reading, to Exhortation, to Doctrine, to meditate on these Things, and give themselves wholly to them. 1 *Tim.* iv. 13, 15. To study the holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto Salvation, and are profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness, to make the Man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good Works. 2 *Tim.* iii. 15, 16, 17. To mind the weightier Matters of Religion, avoiding “ foolish and unlearned Questions” which “ gender Strifes.” 2 *Tim.* ii. 23.

As to their personal Qualifications. They must be endued with a holy Fortitude to bear up under all the Difficulties they may be called to encounter with. “ They
“ must be meek and humble, patient and
“ forbearing; no Strikers nor Brawlers;
“ not self-willed, nor soon angry; not co-
“ vetous, nor given to much Wine; not
“ proud, lest they fall into the Condem-
“ nation of the Devil: They must be
“ condescending towards all, ready to be-
“ come all Things to all Men, as far as
“ they lawfully can, that they may gain
“ some. They should be hospitable, so-
“ ber, modest, grave; they should be ho-
“ ly, blameless, and without Offence;
“ giving no Offence, that the Ministry
“ be not blamed.” Finally, they must
be

be Examples to the Flock, in every amiable Grace and Virtue, being “ Examples of the Believers in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity.”

Upon this View of the ministerial Office, he observes what a various and extensive, and what a difficult Work doth it appear to be; and that the Service is rendered more arduous, if we consider the Opposition and Obstacles that faithful Ministers may expect to meet with in the Discharge of their Work. And these are of various Kinds, arising from the Hatred and Obloquy, the Derisions and Reproaches of the unbelieving and profane; from the Pride, the Peevishness, the Envy and Uncharitableness of many that profess themselves Friends to Religion; from the manifold Temptations and Assaults of their spiritual Enemies, and from their own Weaknesses and Infirmities, Appetites and Passions.

Having thus deliberately and seriously considered what the Work and Office was to which he was called; he, in the next Place, set himself to inquire, what Reason he had to think himself directed by Divine Providence to engage in it.

And with regard to this, the following Considerations, he said, had great Weight with him.

“ First, It is the Will of our Lord Jesus
“ sus

“ fus Christ that there should be a Gospel-
 “ ministry continued in his Church to the
 “ End of the World. And this is of
 “ great Importance for keeping up the
 “ Knowledge and Practice of Religion,
 “ for maintaining the Use and Exercise of
 “ divine Ordinances, for promoting the
 “ Conversion of Souls, and building them
 “ up through Faith and Holiness unto Sal-
 “ vation and eternal Life.

“ Secondly, The Way of signifying his
 “ Will concerning the particular Persons
 “ whom he designs to the Work of the
 “ Ministry, seems ordinarily to be this.
 “ The enduing them with such Quali-
 “ fications and Dispositions, whereby they
 “ are fitted for the useful and acceptable
 “ Discharge of that sacred Office. The
 “ exciting in them Desires and Purposes
 “ to devote themselves to it, and determin-
 “ ing them to undertake it from good and
 “ upright Principles and Motives. The
 “ Judgment and Approbation of those who
 “ are themselves Partakers of that Office,
 “ and who judge them, upon due Trial,
 “ to be well qualified, and fit to be solemnly
 “ set apart and ordained to it.—These
 “ Things seem to be sufficient Indications
 “ that it is agreeable to the Will of Christ,
 “ the great King and Head of his Church,
 “ that such Persons should be admitted to the
 “ Christian Ministry.—But if to this it be
 “ added,

P R E F A C E. xv

“ added, that any particular Christian So-
 “ ciety invites and calls them to take the
 “ pastoral Care and Oversight of them,
 “ from a Persuasion and Experience that
 “ this would tend to their spiritual Edifi-
 “ cation and Benefit; this seems to re-
 “ move all reasonable Doubts, and to be
 “ as full a Proof as can ordinarily be ex-
 “ pected.

“ Now to apply this to my own Case.

“ God has been graciously pleased to give
 “ me some Talents, which seem capable
 “ of being improved to the Edification of
 “ his Church. He hath disposed and in-
 “ clined my Heart to a Willingness to take
 “ upon me the sacred Ministry, and that,
 “ not from worldly carnal Ends and
 “ Views, but from a sincere Intention
 “ and Desire of employing the Talents
 “ he has given me in promoting the Sal-
 “ vation of Souls, and serving the Inte-
 “ rests of Truth, Piety, and Righteous-
 “ ness in the World.—Besides, If I
 “ consider the Course of Divine Provi-
 “ dence towards me, my good Parents,
 “ as far as in them lay, devoted me to the
 “ Ministry from my yearly Youth. God
 “ hath raised me up Friends from Time
 “ to Time, who have given me consider-
 “ able Helps and Encouragements to for-
 “ ward me in my Studies.—And I have
 “ been encouraged by the Judgment and
 “ Appro-

xvi P R E F A C E.

“ Approbation of several learned and pious
“ Ministers, who, after a diligent Course
“ of Trials carried on for a considerable
“ Time, judged me to be properly quali-
“ fied for that sacred Office, and animat-
“ ed me to undertake it.—And since I
“ have been licensed to preach as a Can-
“ didate for the holy Ministry; my pub-
“ lic Labours have met with a general
“ Acceptance, and have, I trust, been
“ really useful.—Besides all which, I have
“ had an unanimous and affectionate Call
“ from a Society of Christian People,
“ many of whom are remarkable for their
“ Knowledge, as well as Piety, to take
“ the pastoral Oversight of them.

“ Upon seriously weighing all these
“ Things, I cannot but think I have a
“ clear Call to the Work of the Mini-
“ stry; and I verily believe, that if I re-
“ jected it I should sin against God, grieve
“ many of his People, counteract the
“ Designs of Divine Providence towards
“ me, and alienate the Talents he has gi-
“ ven me to other Purposes than those for
“ which they seem to have been intended.

“ I desire therefore to accept and com-
“ ply with this Call, and I would do it
“ with the deepest Humility, under a
“ Sense of my own great Unworthiness
“ and Insufficiency in myself; but, at the
“ same Time, with the most intire De-
“ pendence

P R E F A C E. xvii

“ pendance upon God, and Affiance in
 “ him, to carry me through this great
 “ Work, and to enlarge my Heart, and
 “ strengthen my Hands, that I may be
 “ useful and successful in it. And blessed
 “ be his Name, that he is pleased to ad-
 “ mit such an unworthy Creature as I
 “ am, to so high, so honourable an Em-
 “ ployment, which will lay me under an
 “ happy Necessity of conversing frequent-
 “ ly with him, and turning my Thoughts
 “ to Things of the greatest Excellency and
 “ Importance. And I look up unto thee;
 “ the God of all Grace, that thou wouldst
 “ make me an able Minister of the New
 “ Testament: and since I am satisfied it
 “ is thy Will that I should undertake this
 “ Office, here, Lord, I desire to do so;
 “ may it be the Language of my Soul,
 “ in Conformity to the Example of my
 “ blessed Redeemer, I delight to do thy
 “ Will, O my God. Oh that thy Law
 “ may be in my Heart, and thy Spirit
 “ the living reigning Principle there!
 “ Whatever I shall at any Time be con-
 “ vinced will be most to the Advance-
 “ ment of thy Glory, and for the Good
 “ of thy Church, especially of that Flock
 “ of thine which thou committest to my
 “ Charge, I here covenant by thy Grace
 “ to perform it according to my poor Abi-
 “ lities, to seek out for acceptable Words
 [VOL. I.] b “ to

xviii P R E F A C E.

“ to feed thy Sheep, to distribute to them
 “ according to their various Cafes and
 “ Neceffities, not to make my ministerial
 “ Work a Thing by the *bye*, but to give
 “ myfelf wholly to it, to fpend and be
 “ fpent, and chearfully to employ what-
 “ ever Time, Talents, Faculties, and Ad-
 “ vantages I am poffeffed of, for the Ho-
 “ nour of thy Name, and the Salvation of
 “ Souls.

“ But confider, O my Soul, thou art
 “ entering on a difficult and troublefome
 “ Warfare, expect that the Powers of
 “ Darknefs will fet themfelves in array
 “ againft thee; expect to encounter with
 “ the Rage of a malignant World, to meet
 “ with Discouragements from without
 “ and from within, from the Weaknefs
 “ and Inftability of thy own Heart, from
 “ open Enemies, and feeming Friends.
 “ Count upon grievous Trials, Reproaches,
 “ and even Perfecutions for the Sake of
 “ Chrift. For it may happen that all thefe
 “ fhall be thy Lot, as they have often been
 “ of his moft faithful Servants. Nor art
 “ thou to wonder if thou fareft not much
 “ better than thy Lord and Master was
 “ treated by the World, which he came
 “ to fave. If it be fo, Lord, I fubmit,
 “ I acquiefce. Give me but thy Strength
 “ and Grace. Be thou my Leader in this
 “ glorious Warfare, and I fhall be more
 “ than

“ than a Conqueror. But without thee I
 “ dare not engage in it. And I declare
 “ before Heaven and Earth, that I un-
 “ dertake this Work only from a Prospect
 “ and Hope of thy divine Assistance and
 “ Blessing.”

“ I therefore applied myself to God by
 “ earnest Prayer, owning my utter Un-
 “ worthiness, bewailing my manifold De-
 “ fects, that in preaching his holy Word
 “ hitherto, I have not found my Heart
 “ affected in a Manner suitable to the in-
 “ finite Importance of the Truths I have
 “ delivered in his Name, and as becometh
 “ one who is pleading with immortal
 “ Souls about the Concerns of Eternity:
 “ That so much Pride, Selfishness, and a
 “ vain Desire of Applause hath mixed it-
 “ self with my religious and ministerial
 “ Services. I prayed that God would give
 “ me those Gifts and Graces which are
 “ so necessary to the right Discharge of
 “ this sacred Function; particularly, that
 “ he would inflame my Soul with Love to
 “ him, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, and
 “ with a well regulated Zeal for his Glo-
 “ ry, and the Interests of his Kingdom;
 “ that he would impress my Heart with a
 “ deep Sense of his all-seeing Eye, and a
 “ profound Reverence of his adorable
 “ Majesty; that he would give me more
 “ melting Bowels, and a tender Commi-
 “ sion

xx P R E F A C E.

“feration for precious Souls, those espe-
 “cially of the Flock committed to my
 “Care; that he would affect my Heart
 “with the great Truths I deliver to others,
 “and enable me to study, preach, and
 “pray, as for Eternity; that he would
 “assist me in ordering my Conversation
 “aright, that I may guide others not on-
 “ly by my Doctrine, but by my Example
 “too, in all the Virtues of the Christian
 “Life; and, finally, that he would clothe
 “me with Humility, that amiable Gos-
 “pel Grace, and enable me to put on that
 “evangelical Charity, which is the Bond
 “of Perfectness.”

Such were the Workings of his Soul on this solemn Occasion; and the Impressions that were made upon him were deep and lasting. For he engaged in the Work of the Ministry, not with worldly Views, but from a sincere Desire to employ the Talents God had given him in promoting the Salvation of Souls, and serving the Interests of Truth and Liberty, Piety and Virtue in the World. With such animating Views he discharged the Duties of his Character as a Minister of *Christ*, with laborious Diligence and Fidelity. And by an indefatigable Application to Reading and Study, and the great Improvements he made in all useful Knowledge and Literature, which afterwards appeared in his
 Writings

Writings on different Subjects, he attained to an high Reputation, not only among his own Friends and Hearers, but in the learned World, and among Persons of all Denominations.

As a Preacher he was very acceptable: His Compositions for the Pulpit were plain, correct, and useful, equally fitted to convince the Understanding and to affect the Heart. He did not chuse to entertain his Hearers with vain Speculations, which only gender Strife: And when any controverted Doctrines came in his Way, he treated them with great Modesty, Moderation, and Charity, as became one who was sensible of the narrow Limits of human Knowledge in this State of Darknes and Imperfection. He thought, the closer we keep to Scripture in speaking of the particular Doctrines of Revelation, and the less we make Use of logical Terms and subtle Distinctions the better: and that some Mens Presumption in attempting to explain them, hath given the Adversaries of Christianity an Advantage which they never would have had, if Divines had not gone beyond the Simplicity of the Gospel.

He not only thought and reasoned clearly on every Subject, but he had so happy a Talent of arranging his Thoughts, and conveying his Sentiments to others in a Stile manly and unaffected, and at the

xxii P R E F A C E.

same Time so easy and perspicuous, and by the Help of a faithful Memory, exactly delivered without any Use of Notes, that the meanest, as well as the most judicious of his Hearers, who gave proper Attention, could hardly fail of being affected and instructed: At least, one would naturally suppose this to be the Effect, when the most important Truths were delivered in so improving a Way by a Man of his Character, who had the Honour of God and the Redeemer, and the Interests of substantial Religion and Virtue so much at Heart; and when every one must see, that what he said affected himself, and that he *felt* what he spoke.

In the Year 1731, he married Mrs. *Ann Maquay*, Widow of the Reverend Mr. *Thomas Maquay*, who had been Minister to the Congregation of *Plunket-street*. Between him and the Doctor there had been the greatest Intimacy, a Fellowship in their Studies, and a constant Course of Friendship for several Years. In the Sermon he printed on his greatly lamented Death he gives this general Account of him.

“ He was born and bred in this City.
 “ Here he had his Education and Learning, and was an Exception to that general Rule, that *a Prophet is without Honour in his own Country*. He made
 “ a quick Progress in Learning even in his
 “ early

“ early Years. Then I commenced my
 “ first Acquaintance with him, never since
 “ interrupted by any Breach or Alienation
 “ of Affection to this Day. After having
 “ gone through our Course of Philosophy
 “ together, we applied ourselves jointly
 “ to the Study of Divinity, under the
 “ happy Care of the same worthy Fathers
 “ in the Ministry.—Under such Ad-
 “ vantages, improved by his prompt na-
 “ tural Parts and great Industry, he came
 “ out richly furnished and adorned to the
 “ Work of the sacred Ministry. And
 “ scarce had he entered on his public Mi-
 “ nistrations, when you of this Congre-
 “ gation cast your Eye upon him for a
 “ Colleague to your late excellent Pastor,
 “ the Reverend Mr. *Alexander Sinclair*.—
 “ All, however various in their Tempers
 “ and Inclinations, centered and united in
 “ him; instructed and affected with his
 “ Preaching, edified by his Example, and
 “ engaged by his Conversation.”—And
 after having enlarged on some Particulars
 concerning him, he adds, “ I hope I shall
 “ now be indulged a little, if I speak of
 “ him under the amiable Character of a
 “ Friend. He was of a sweet and peace-
 “ ful Disposition, lovely in his Temper,
 “ agreeable in his Conversation; and they
 “ must be hard to please indeed, that were
 “ not won by his engaging Manner. There

xxiv P R E F A C E.

“ was nothing in him of that Moroseness
“ or Sullenness that has sometimes cloud-
“ ed the Excellencies of Persons that have
“ been otherwise very valuable; but an
“ open and free Behaviour, an habitual
“ Cheerfulness, the genuine Indication of
“ an easy and sprightly Mind. His Con-
“ versation was pleasant and facetious,
“ but always within the Bounds of Decen-
“ cy and Innocence, without ever indulg-
“ ing himself in any Freedoms unbecom-
“ ing his Profession and Character. He
“ had a Soul formed to Tenderness and
“ Sympathy. The Case of distressed Per-
“ sons and Families was often observed to
“ make a very deep Impression upon his
“ Spirit, and he was ever ready to com-
“ fort and assist them according to the ut-
“ most of his Ability.”

Dr. *Leland* was fully sensible of the Wis-
dom of his Choice in the matrimonial State,
as his Wife was a very agreeable Compani-
on, of an excellent Temper, and of sincere
Piety; and they proved mutual Helps and
Comforts to one another. He had several
Children by her, but they died when they
were very young: and as his Wife had Chil-
dren by her former Husband, he behaved
with a most tender, and not less than pa-
rental Affection to them and their Off-
spring, treating them as if they had been
his own, and with a most solicitous At-
tention

tion watched over and instructed them, and trained them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord.

In the Year 1730, Dr. *Tindal* published his laboured Performance, intituled, *Christianity as old as the Creation; or the Gospel a Republication of the Law of Nature*. As this Book made a great Noise, several good Answers were given to it. But he thought more might justly be said to expose the fallacious Reasonings, the Contradictions and Malice of that dangerous Piece: And to shew, that instead of deserving the Applause which many had given it, he was a subtle uncandid Writer, and his Performance full of Inconsistencies and empty Sophisms, specious perhaps at first View, but, when narrowly examined, very weak and trifling. This therefore engaged his Pen in a Cause, in the Defence of which he afterwards became so eminent. It was not any vain Desire of Applause that put him upon it, but an ardent Zeal for the divine Glory, and an hearty Concern for the Honour and Interest of Christianity amongst us, which he was persuaded is the Cause of God; and he thought, that if he could be any Way useful for vindicating the Honour of our Redeemer, and of his glorious Gospel, it was his Duty not to let his Talents lie neglected, but to consecrate them to God, and
the

the Service of his Church: Accordingly in the Year 1733, he published two large Volumes in 8vo, under the Title of *An Answer to a late Book intitled Christianity as old as the Creation*. This Work is much larger, and takes a wider Compass than the other Answers, and carries in it full Proof of the Doctor's Learning and great Application. It is divided into two Parts. In the first Part, which takes up the first Volume, the Author's Account of the Law of Nature is considered, and his Scheme is shewn to be inconsistent with Reason and with itself, and of ill Consequence to the Interests of Virtue, and to the Good of Mankind. In the second Part, the Authority and Usefulness of the Revelation contained in the sacred Writings of the Old and New Testament is asserted and vindicated against the Objections and Misrepresentations of this Writer. He has given a large Account of this Book, and of his own Answer, in the View of the Deistical Writers *, which makes any farther Enlargement on it needless.

In the Year 1737 Dr. *Morgan* published a Book with a pompous Title, viz. *The Moral Philosopher*; to which Dr. *Leland* returned an Answer in 8vo in 1739, intitled, *The divine Authority of the Old and New Testament asserted, &c.* against the

* Vol. I. p. 112, &c.

unjust Aspersions and false Reasonings of a Book intituled, *The Moral Philosopher*. The Design of which was to take a distinct View of what Dr. *Morgan* had offered, both against Revelation in general, and against the Holy Scriptures in particular.

The Author of *the Moral Philosopher*, who was a Writer of great Vivacity, did not continue long silent: He published a Defence of his former Book in what he called *The second Volume of the Moral Philosopher, or a farther Vindication of Moral Truth and Reason*. This was chiefly designed against Dr. *Leland's* Answer to him, in which he manifests the greatest Effrontery, and uses very indecent Language. However, he published a second Volume of *The divine Authority of the Old and New Testament asserted*, in Answer to the second Volume of *the Moral Philosopher*, in 8vo, 1740. In this Reply every Thing is considered, that had any Appearance of Argument in this Book, and his unfair Misrepresentations, his unjust Aspersions, and confident Attempts to impose Falshoods upon his Readers, are detected and exposed*.

In 1742 a remarkable Pamphlet appeared, which is called *Christianity not founded on Argument*. The Author of this Piece carried on his Design against the Christian Religion in a Manner somewhat

* Deistical Writers, Vol. I. p. 131, &c.

xxviii P R E F A C E.

different from what others had done before him. Under specious Appearances of Zeal for Religion, and under the Cover of devout Expressions, he endeavoured to shew that the Christian Faith hath no Foundation in Reason, nor hath any Thing to support it but a wild and senseless Enthusiasm, destitute of all Proof and Evidence. And if this could be made out, it would, no Doubt, answer the Intention he plainly had in View, the exposing the Christian Religion to the Derision and Contempt of Mankind.

In Answer to which the Doctor wrote *Remarks on a late Pamphlet intitled, Christianity not founded on Argument*, contained in two Letters, which were published separately in 1744. The Design of this Answer was not to enter upon a distinct and particular Account of the Evidences, which are usually produced in Proof of the Christian Revelation, which he had considered largely on some former Occasions; but to represent in a clear and concise Manner, the Absurdity and ill Tendency, as well as manifold Inconsistencies of this Writer's Scheme; to give a plain Confutation of the principal Arguments from Scripture and Reason by which he pretended to support it, and to detect and expose his Fallacies and Misrepresentations*.

* Deist. Writers, Vol. I. p. 151, &c.

In the Year 1753 the Doctor published Reflections on the late Lord *Bolingbroke's* Letters on the Study and Use of History, especially so far as they relate to Christianity and the Holy Scriptures †.

Thus did this good Man most laboriously exert himself in the Defence of our holy Religion. And being more and more fully persuaded of the Truth and divine Original, as well as of the great Excellence and Importance of Christianity to the Virtue and Happiness of Mankind, he published Answers to the several Authors, who with great Art and Industry endeavoured to undermine it, and expose it as an Imposture. And his Answers are very highly and generally esteemed as among the best Defences of Christianity. He was indeed a Master in this Controversy; and his History of it, stiled, *A View of the Deistical Writers, that have appeared in England in the last and present Century; with Observations upon them, and some Account of the Answers which have been published against them*; as we are well assured it has been exceedingly useful, so it will do lasting Honour to his Name with all who have the Interest of Religion truly at Heart. The third Edition of it, improved, was published in two large Volumes 8vo, closely printed, in the Year 1757. In the Conclusion of the Preface he says, “ It gives me some

† Vol. II. p. 265, &c.

“ Concern,

xvi P R E F A C E.

“ Approbation of several learned and pious
“ Ministers, who, after a diligent Course
“ of Trials carried on for a considerable
“ Time, judged me to be properly quali-
“ fied for that sacred Office, and animat-
“ ed me to undertake it.—And since I
“ have been licensed to preach as a Can-
“ didate for the holy Ministry; my pub-
“ lic Labours have met with a general
“ Acceptance, and have, I trust, been
“ really useful.—Besides all which, I have
“ had an unanimous and affectionate Call
“ from a Society of Christian People,
“ many of whom are remarkable for their
“ Knowledge, as well as Piety, to take
“ the pastoral Oversight of them.

“ Upon seriously weighing all these
“ Things, I cannot but think I have a
“ clear Call to the Work of the Mini-
“ stry; and I verily believe, that if I re-
“ jected it I should sin against God, grieve
“ many of his People, counteract the
“ Designs of Divine Providence towards
“ me, and alienate the Talents he has gi-
“ ven me to other Purposes than those for
“ which they seem to have been intended.

“ I desire therefore to accept and com-
“ ply with this Call, and I would do it
“ with the deepest Humility, under a
“ Sense of my own great Unworthiness
“ and Insufficiency in myself; but, at the
“ same Time, with the most intire De-
“ pendence

P R E F A C E. xvii

“ pendance upon God, and Affiance in
 “ him, to carry me through this great
 “ Work, and to enlarge my Heart, and
 “ strengthen my Hands, that I may be
 “ useful and successful in it. And blessed
 “ be his Name, that he is pleased to ad-
 “ mit such an unworthy Creature as I
 “ am, to so high, so honourable an Em-
 “ ployment, which will lay me under an
 “ happy Necessity of conversing frequent-
 “ ly with him, and turning my Thoughts
 “ to Things of the greatest Excellency and
 “ Importance. And I look up unto thee;
 “ the God of all Grace, that thou wouldst
 “ make me an able Minister of the New
 “ Testament: and since I am satisfied it
 “ is thy Will that I should undertake this
 “ Office, here, Lord, I desire to do so;
 “ may it be the Language of my Soul,
 “ in Conformity to the Example of my
 “ blessed Redeemer, I delight to do thy
 “ Will, O my God. Oh that thy Law
 “ may be in my Heart, and thy Spirit
 “ the living reigning Principle there!
 “ Whatever I shall at any Time be con-
 “ vinced will be most to the Advance-
 “ ment of thy Glory, and for the Good
 “ of thy Church, especially of that Flock
 “ of thine which thou committest to my
 “ Charge, I here covenant by thy Grace
 “ to perform it according to my poor Abi-
 “ lities, to seek out for acceptable Words
 [VOL. I.] b “ to

xviii P R E F A C E.

“ to feed thy Sheep, to distribute to them
 “ according to their various Cafes and
 “ Neceffities, not to make my ministerial
 “ Work a Thing by the *bye*, but to give
 “ myself wholly to it, to fpend and be
 “ fpent, and chearfully to employ what-
 “ ever Time, Talents, Faculties, and Ad-
 “ vantages I am poffeffed of, for the Ho-
 “ nour of thy Name, and the Salvation of
 “ Souls.

“ But confider, O my Soul, thou art
 “ entering on a difficult and troublefome
 “ Warfare, expect that the Powers of
 “ Darknefs will fet themfelves in array
 “ againft thee ; expect to encounter with
 “ the Rage of a malignant World, to meet
 “ with Discouragements from without
 “ and from within, from the Weaknefs
 “ and Inftability of thy own Heart, from
 “ open Enemies, and feeming Friends.
 “ Count upon grievous Trials, Reproaches,
 “ and even Perfecutions for the Sake of
 “ Chrift. For it may happen that all thefe
 “ fhall be thy Lot, as they have often been
 “ of his moft faithful Servants. Nor art
 “ thou to wonder if thou fareft not much
 “ better than thy Lord and Master was
 “ treated by the World, which he came
 “ to fave. If it be fo, Lord, I fubmit,
 “ I acquiefce. Give me but thy Strength
 “ and Grace. Be thou my Leader in this
 “ glorious Warfare, and I fhall be more
 “ than

“ than a Conqueror. But without thee I
 “ dare not engage in it. And I declare
 “ before Heaven and Earth, that I un-
 “ dertake this Work only from a Prospect
 “ and Hope of thy divine Assistance and
 “ Blessing.”

“ I therefore applied myself to God by
 “ earnest Prayer, owning my utter Un-
 “ worthiness, bewailing my manifold De-
 “ fects, that in preaching his holy Word
 “ hitherto, I have not found my Heart
 “ affected in a Manner suitable to the in-
 “ finite Importance of the Truths I have
 “ delivered in his Name, and as becometh
 “ one who is pleading with immortal
 “ Souls about the Concerns of Eternity:
 “ That so much Pride, Selfishness, and a
 “ vain Desire of Applause hath mixed it-
 “ self with my religious and ministerial
 “ Services. I prayed that God would give
 “ me those Gifts and Graces which are
 “ so necessary to the right Discharge of
 “ this sacred Function; particularly, that
 “ he would inflame my Soul with Love to
 “ him, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, and
 “ with a well regulated Zeal for his Glo-
 “ ry, and the Interests of his Kingdom;
 “ that he would impress my Heart with a
 “ deep Sense of his all-seeing Eye, and a
 “ profound Reverence of his adorable
 “ Majesty; that he would give me more
 “ melting Bowels, and a tender Commi-
 “ sion

“ feration for precious Souls, those espe-
 “ cially of the Flock committed to my
 “ Care; that he would affect my Heart
 “ with the great Truths I deliver to others,
 “ and enable me to study, preach, and
 “ pray, as for Eternity; that he would
 “ assist me in ordering my Conversation
 “ aright, that I may guide others not on-
 “ ly by my Doctrine, but by my Example
 “ too, in all the Virtues of the Christian
 “ Life; and, finally, that he would clothe
 “ me with Humility, that amiable Gos-
 “ pel Grace, and enable me to put on that
 “ evangelical Charity, which is the Bond
 “ of Perfectness.”

Such were the Workings of his Soul
 on this solemn Occasion; and the Impres-
 sions that were made upon him were deep
 and lasting. For he engaged in the Work of
 the Ministry, not with worldly Views,
 but from a sincere Desire to employ the
 Talents God had given him in promoting
 the Salvation of Souls, and serving the Inter-
 ests of Truth and Liberty, Piety and Vir-
 tue in the World. With such animating
 Views he discharged the Duties of his
 Character as a Minister of *Christ*, with la-
 borious Diligence and Fidelity. And by
 an indefatigable Application to Reading
 and Study, and the great Improvements he
 made in all useful Knowledge and Litera-
 ture, which afterwards appeared in his
 Writings

Writings on different Subjects, he attained to an high Reputation, not only among his own Friends and Hearers, but in the learned World, and among Persons of all Denominations.

As a Preacher he was very acceptable: His Compositions for the Pulpit were plain, correct, and useful, equally fitted to convince the Understanding and to affect the Heart. He did not chuse to entertain his Hearers with vain Speculations, which only gender Strife: And when any controverted Doctrines came in his Way, he treated them with great Modesty, Moderation, and Charity, as became one who was sensible of the narrow Limits of human Knowledge in this State of Darknes and Imperfection. He thought, the closer we keep to Scripture in speaking of the particular Doctrines of Revelation, and the less we make Use of logical Terms and subtle Distinctions the better: and that some Mens Presumption in attempting to explain them, hath given the Adversaries of Christianity an Advantage which they never would have had, if Divines had not gone beyond the Simplicity of the Gospel.

He not only thought and reasoned clearly on every Subject, but he had so happy a Talent of arranging his Thoughts, and conveying his Sentiments to others in a Style manly and unaffected, and at the

xxii P R E F A C E.

same Time so easy and perspicuous, and by the Help of a faithful Memory, exactly delivered without any Use of Notes, that the meanest, as well as the most judicious of his Hearers, who gave proper Attention, could hardly fail of being affected and instructed: At least, one would naturally suppose this to be the Effect, when the most important Truths were delivered in so improving a Way by a Man of his Character, who had the Honour of God and the Redeemer, and the Interests of substantial Religion and Virtue so much at Heart; and when every one must see, that what he said affected himself, and that he *felt* what he spoke.

In the Year 1731, he married Mrs. *Ann Maquay*, Widow of the Reverend Mr. *Thomas Maquay*, who had been Minister to the Congregation of *Plunket-strect*. Between him and the Doctor there had been the greatest Intimacy, a Fellowship in their Studies, and a constant Course of Friendship for several Years. In the Sermon he printed on his greatly lamented Death he gives this general Account of him.

“ He was born and bred in this City.
 “ Here he had his Education and Learning, and was an Exception to that general Rule, that *a Prophet is without Honour in his own Country*. He made
 “ a quick Progress in Learning even in his
 “ early

“ early Years. Then I commenced my
 “ first Acquaintance with him, never since
 “ interrupted by any Breach or Alienation
 “ of Affection to this Day. After having
 “ gone through our Course of Philosophy
 “ together, we applied ourselves jointly
 “ to the Study of Divinity, under the
 “ happy Care of the same worthy Fathers
 “ in the Ministry.—Under such Ad-
 “ vantages, improved by his prompt na-
 “ tural Parts and great Industry, he came
 “ out richly furnished and adorned to the
 “ Work of the sacred Ministry. And
 “ scarce had he entered on his public Mi-
 “ nistrations, when you of this Congre-
 “ gation cast your Eye upon him for a
 “ Colleague to your late excellent Pastor,
 “ the Reverend Mr. *Alexander Sinclair*.—
 “ All, however various in their Tempers
 “ and Inclinations, centered and united in
 “ him; instructed and affected with his
 “ Preaching, edified by his Example, and
 “ engaged by his Conversation.”—And
 after having enlarged on some Particulars
 concerning him, he adds, “ I hope I shall
 “ now be indulged a little, if I speak of
 “ him under the amiable Character of a
 “ Friend. He was of a sweet and peace-
 “ ful Disposition, lovely in his Temper,
 “ agreeable in his Conversation; and they
 “ must be hard to please indeed, that were
 “ not won by his engaging Manner. There

xxiv P R E F A C E.

“ was nothing in him of that Moroseness
“ or Sullenness that has sometimes cloud-
“ ed the Excellencies of Persons that have
“ been otherwise very valuable; but an
“ open and free Behaviour, an habitual
“ Cheerfulness, the genuine Indication of
“ an easy and sprightly Mind. His Con-
“ versation was pleasant and facetious,
“ but always within the Bounds of Decen-
“ cy and Innocence, without ever indulg-
“ ing himself in any Freedoms unbecom-
“ ing his Profession and Character. He
“ had a Soul formed to Tenderness and
“ Sympathy. The Case of distressed Per-
“ sons and Families was often observed to
“ make a very deep Impression upon his
“ Spirit, and he was ever ready to com-
“ fort and assist them according to the ut-
“ most of his Ability.”

Dr. *Leland* was fully sensible of the Wis-
dom of his Choice in the matrimonial State,
as his Wife was a very agreeable Compani-
on, of an excellent Temper, and of sincere
Piety; and they proved mutual Helps and
Comforts to one another. He had several
Children by her, but they died when they
were very young: and as his Wife had Chil-
dren by her former Husband, he behaved
with a most tender, and not less than pa-
rental Affection to them and their Off-
spring, treating them as if they had been
his own, and with a most solicitous At-
tention

tion watched over and instructed them, and trained them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord.

In the Year 1730, Dr. *Tindal* published his laboured Performance, intituled, *Christianity as old as the Creation; or the Gospel a Republication of the Law of Nature*. As this Book made a great Noise, several good Answers were given to it. But he thought more might justly be said to expose the fallacious Reasonings, the Contradictions and Malice of that dangerous Piece: And to shew, that instead of deserving the Applause which many had given it, he was a subtle uncandid Writer, and his Performance full of Inconsistencies and empty Sophisms, specious perhaps at first View, but, when narrowly examined, very weak and trifling. This therefore engaged his Pen in a Cause, in the Defence of which he afterwards became so eminent. It was not any vain Desire of Applause that put him upon it, but an ardent Zeal for the divine Glory, and an hearty Concern for the Honour and Interest of Christianity amongst us, which he was persuaded is the Cause of God; and he thought, that if he could be any Way useful for vindicating the Honour of our Redeemer, and of his glorious Gospel, it was his Duty not to let his Talents lie neglected, but to consecrate them to God, and
the

xxvi P R E F A C E.

the Service of his Church: Accordingly in the Year 1733, he published two large Volumes in 8vo, under the Title of *An Answer to a late Book intitled Christianity as old as the Creation*. This Work is much larger, and takes a wider Compass than the other Answers, and carries in it full Proof of the Doctor's Learning and great Application. It is divided into two Parts. In the first Part, which takes up the first Volume, the Author's Account of the Law of Nature is considered, and his Scheme is shewn to be inconsistent with Reason and with itself, and of ill Consequence to the Interests of Virtue, and to the Good of Mankind. In the second Part, the Authority and Usefulness of the Revelation contained in the sacred Writings of the Old and New Testament is asserted and vindicated against the Objections and Misrepresentations of this Writer. He has given a large Account of this Book, and of his own Answer, in the View of the Deistical Writers *, which makes any farther Enlargement on it needless.

In the Year 1737 Dr. *Morgan* published a Book with a pompous Title, viz. *The Moral Philosopher*; to which Dr. *Leland* returned an Answer in 8vo in 1739, intitled, *The divine Authority of the Old and New Testament asserted, &c.* against the

* Vol. I. p. 112, &c.

unjust Aspersions and false Reasonings of a Book intitled, *The Moral Philosopher*. The Design of which was to take a distinct View of what Dr. *Morgan* had offered, both against Revelation in general, and against the Holy Scriptures in particular.

The Author of *the Moral Philosopher*, who was a Writer of great Vivacity, did not continue long silent: He published a Defence of his former Book in what he called *The second Volume of the Moral Philosopher, or a farther Vindication of Moral Truth and Reason*. This was chiefly designed against Dr. *Leland's* Answer to him, in which he manifests the greatest Effrontery, and uses very indecent Language. However, he published a second Volume of *The divine Authority of the Old and New Testament asserted*, in Answer to the second Volume of *the Moral Philosopher*, in 8vo, 1740. In this Reply every Thing is considered, that had any Appearance of Argument in this Book, and his unfair Misrepresentations, his unjust Aspersions, and confident Attempts to impose Falshoods upon his Readers, are detected and exposed*.

In 1742 a remarkable Pamphlet appeared, which is called *Christianity not founded on Argument*. The Author of this Piece carried on his Design against the Christian Religion in a Manner somewhat

* Deistical Writers, Vol. I. p. 131, &c.

xxviii P R E F A C E.

different from what others had done before him. Under specious Appearances of Zeal for Religion, and under the Cover of devout Expressions, he endeavoured to shew that the Christian Faith hath no Foundation in Reason, nor hath any Thing to support it but a wild and senseless Enthusiasm, destitute of all Proof and Evidence. And if this could be made out, it would, no Doubt, answer the Intention he plainly had in View, the exposing the Christian Religion to the Derision and Contempt of Mankind.

In Answer to which the Doctor wrote *Remarks on a late Pamphlet intitled, Christianity not founded on Argument*, contained in two Letters, which were published separately in 1744. The Design of this Answer was not to enter upon a distinct and particular Account of the Evidences, which are usually produced in Proof of the Christian Revelation, which he had considered largely on some former Occasions; but to represent in a clear and concise Manner, the Absurdity and ill Tendency, as well as manifold Inconsistencies of this Writer's Scheme; to give a plain Confutation of the principal Arguments from Scripture and Reason by which he pretended to support it, and to detect and expose his Fallacies and Misrepresentations*.

* Deist. Writers, Vol. I. p. 151, &c.

In the Year 1753 the Doctor published Reflections on the late Lord *Bolingbroke's* Letters on the Study and Use of History, especially so far as they relate to Christianity and the Holy Scriptures †.

Thus did this good Man most laboriously exert himself in the Defence of our holy Religion. And being more and more fully persuaded of the Truth and divine Original, as well as of the great Excellence and Importance of Christianity to the Virtue and Happiness of Mankind, he published Answers to the several Authors, who with great Art and Industry endeavoured to undermine it, and expose it as an Imposture. And his Answers are very highly and generally esteemed as among the best Defences of Christianity. He was indeed a Master in this Controversy; and his History of it, stiled, *A View of the Deistical Writers, that have appeared in England in the last and present Century; with Observations upon them, and some Account of the Answers which have been published against them*; as we are well assured it has been exceedingly useful, so it will do lasting Honour to his Name with all who have the Interest of Religion truly at Heart. The third Edition of it, improved, was published in two large Volumes 8vo, closely printed, in the Year 1757. In the Conclusion of the Preface he says, “ It gives me some

† Vol. II. p. 265, &c.

“ Concern,

“ Concern, that this Work is become so
 “ much larger than was at first intended,
 “ which I am afraid will prove a Disad-
 “ vantage to it, and disgust or discourage
 “ some Readers. But I hope favourable
 “ Allowances will be made, considering
 “ the Extent of the Design, and the Variety
 “ of Matters here treated of. I believe it
 “ will appear, that there are few Objec-
 “ tions which have been advanced in this
 “ Controversy, but what are taken Notice
 “ of in the following Work, and either
 “ sufficiently obviated, or References are
 “ made to Books, where fuller Answers
 “ are to be found. May God in his holy
 “ Providence follow what is now published
 “ with his Blessing, that it may prove of
 “ real Service to the important Interests of
 “ Religion among us ; to promote which,
 “ as far as my Ability reaches, I shall ever
 “ account the greatest Happiness of my
 “ Life. And it should be the Matter of
 “ our earnest Prayers to God, that all those
 “ who value themselves upon the honour-
 “ able Name and Privileges of Christians,
 “ may join in united Efforts to support
 “ so glorious a Cause, in which the Pre-
 “ servation and Advancement of true Re-
 “ ligion and Virtue, the Peace and good
 “ Order of Society, and the present and
 “ eternal Happiness of Individuals is so
 “ nearly concerned.”

Nor did he undergo this extraordinary
 Labour

Labour only in the Prime and Vigor of Life. His Zeal in the Cause of Religion did not permit him to take Rest even when advanced to old Age. When he was past seventy he was seized with a violent Fever, from which none expected his Recovery. Though he was thoroughly resigned to the Will of Heaven, yet he was not only satisfied but pleased to have Life a little prolonged, that he might put his finishing Hand to a Work, which had cost him far more Labour and Pains than any of his former Writings, and which he hoped would be of Service to the World, as he intended it to be the last in which he would engage. The Work soon after appeared to the World in two Volumes 4to, under the Title of *The Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation, shewn from the State of Religion in the ancient Heathen World, especially with respect to the Knowledge and Worship of the one true God; a Rule of moral Duty; and a State of future Rewards and Punishments: to which is prefixed, a long preliminary Discourse on natural and revealed Religion.* This indeed is an amazing Work considering his Age and Infirmities, as he had Recourse to all that great Variety of Books, and generally in the Original, which are referred to in it. Nor did the Reception it met with in the World disappoint his Expectation. It has been lately reprinted in two large Volumes 8vo.

xxxii P R E F A C E.

After what has been said, it need scarcely be mentioned, that his many eminent Writings, and unwearied Labours to serve the Christian Cause, in an Age so prone to Infidelity and Licentiousness, and prosecuted often in ill Health, and, at best, in a very infirm State of Body, procured him a great Name in the learned World, and uncommon Marks of Generosity and Respect from Persons in the highest Rank, in the established Church, both here and in *England*.

Two of the Universities in *Scotland* also presented him with Testimonies of their great Regard to his Merit, on account of his great Abilities, and useful Services to the Christian World: *Glasgow* with his Degree of Master of Arts, which was preparatory, according to the Rules of that College, to their conferring on him the Degree of Doctor of Divinity: which, in the mean Time, was sent to him in the most respectful Manner by the University and King's College of *Aberdeen*, in the Year 1739.

But it was not only his great Learning, Abilities as a Writer, or his Ministrations as a Christian Pastor, which attract our high Esteem and warm Affection. These were accompanied by an amiable Temper, and a most exemplary Life. His natural Powers must appear, from what hath been already said, to be very good. He had a quick

Apprehension, Vivacity of Thought, a solid Judgment, and a Memory that was really amazing; so that he was often called *a walking Library*. But his moral Character was truly lovely. As he entertained the noblest Sentiments of the Deity and his Perfections, his Providence and moral Administration, so his Piety and Devotion was liberal, rational, and manly, free from Superstition and Enthusiasm. A Zeal to promote the Glory of God, and his Kingdom of Truth and Righteousness in the World, seemed to be the governing Principle of his Life. He walked with God, and had pleasing Communion with him in sacred Meditation, and the Exercise of Prayer and Praise. And he enjoyed with such Relish that Delight, which is to be found in Fellowship with God, that he could from his own Feelings testify, that the Ways of religious Wisdom are Ways of Pleasantness, and that the perishing Pleasures of Sense are not worthy to be compared to the pure and noble Joys of Religion and Virtue.

His Acquiescence in and Resignation to the Will of his heavenly Father, was exercised by many severe Trials and Afflictions, which he bore with an unrepining Submission, and truly Christian Patience and Fortitude. When he had an Account brought him of the Failure of some Persons, in whose Hands the greatest Part of what Money he had was placed, he made

xxxiv P R E F A C E.

ſuch Reflections as theſe, which ſhewed the
 Temper of his own Mind, and which, I
 dare ſay, will be agreeable to the Reader
 to have recited. “ I have had an Account
 “ of an Affair, by which I am like to be
 “ a great Loſer. It hath pleaſed God to
 “ cut ſhort my ſmall Fortune, by one
 “ Stroke after another, ſo that I am de-
 “ prived of the greateſt Part of my worldly
 “ Subſtance. What a poor Condition
 “ ſhould I be in, if I had no higher or
 “ ſtabler Portion ! I have had great Ex-
 “ perience in my own little Affairs of the
 “ Vanity and Uncertainty of all worldly
 “ Goods, that they are fleeting and tranſi-
 “ tory Things. And if this do but make
 “ me more deſirous, and earneſtly induſtri-
 “ ous to ſecure to myſelf a better, and a
 “ more enduring Subſtance, I ſhall then
 “ be a Gainer by the Loſs. As I believe
 “ that the Diſappointments I have met
 “ with, are all under the wiſe Ordination
 “ of Divine Providence, ſo I am perſuaded
 “ that it is for wiſe and righteous Ends
 “ that they have been permitted and or-
 “ dained. I find it hard to ſuppreſs in-
 “ ward Uneaſineſs, and anxious Cares,
 “ which are apt, on ſuch Occaſions, to
 “ riſe up in my Breaſt. But bleſſed be
 “ God, who hath given me greater Strength
 “ of Mind to bear up under ſuch outward
 “ Evils, than I have ſometimes had, and
 “ hath, I hope, formed me to a Sub-
 “ miſſion

P R E F A C E. XXXV

“ mission to his Will, and an Acquiescence
 “ in his Disposals. It is my earnest Desire,
 “ and shall be my Endeavour, that no
 “ worldly Crosses shall break the Harmony
 “ of my Spirit, or interrupt the Peace and
 “ good Order of my Soul, which were it
 “ to depend meerly on external Accidents
 “ and Circumstances, would be the most
 “ precarious and uncertain Thing in the
 “ World. A Man’s Life, that is, the
 “ Happiness of his Life, doth not consist
 “ in the Abundance that he possesseth. I
 “ see many, who have a large Affluence
 “ of worldly Riches, who yet have so
 “ many Things to render them uneasy, and
 “ have so little Satisfaction in the Frame
 “ and Temper of their Minds, that they
 “ deserve to be pitied rather than envied:
 “ nor would I, if it were left to my own
 “ Choice, change Conditions with them,
 “ even in this World. And, on the other
 “ Hand, I see many that are in poor Cir-
 “ cumstances who yet are easy and con-
 “ tented: and why may not I be so too?
 “ I have still something left, which though
 “ but little, is more than many others
 “ enjoy. I have not been afflicted with
 “ pinching Penury and Want. I have
 “ still enough to furnish me with the Ne-
 “ cessaries and many of the Conveniences
 “ of Life. I have Peace and Satisfaction
 “ in my own Family. God hath restored

XXXVI P R E F A C E.

“ me to a greater Measure of Health than
“ I had Reason to expect. And I am not
“ without some Degree of Reputation and
“ Acceptance in the World. But, I hope,
“ God hath done far more for me than
“ this. That he hath blessed me with
“ spiritual Blessings, of an infinitely more
“ glorious Nature than any worldly Ad-
“ vantages whatsoever; that he hath by his
“ Spirit drawn my Heart to the sincere
“ prevailing Love and Choice of him for
“ my God, and hath given himself to me
“ to be mine, my God, my Father, my
“ Portion and Felicity, in a new and ever-
“ lasting Covenant, and hath, I trust, raised
“ me to the lively Hope of a glorious
“ Immortality. And if I have an Interest
“ in such Privileges and Benefits, and am
“ made Partaker of such sublime Hopes,
“ why should I fret and repine that I
“ have but a small Portion of the Riches
“ or Affluence of this present World?
“ Lord, I would not prescribe to thy
“ Wisdom. If it seemeth fit to thee, that
“ my Condition here on Earth should be
“ but poor and mean, thy Will be done.
“ I leave it to thee to order my outward
“ Affairs and Circumstances according to
“ thy own good Pleasure: But what I would
“ most earnestly desire is, that whatever
“ Station or Circumstances I am in, I may
“ be enabled to serve and glorify thee in

P R E F A C E. xxxvii

“ that Station, and in those Circumstances.
 “ Let me but be an Instrument for shew-
 “ ing forth thy Praises in the World, and
 “ promoting the Good of Mankind, as far
 “ as the Sphere of my Ability reacheth ;
 “ let me but grow in the amiable Graces
 “ and Virtues of the Christian Life, and
 “ have an inward Peace of Conscience,
 “ and a Sense of thy Love and Favour, and
 “ I shall be comparatively little concerned
 “ about my external Circumstances in this
 “ transitory World.” In this manner did
 this pious Man submit to all the Appoint-
 ments of infinite Wisdom and Goodness
 in all the distressing Scenes of Life. In-
 deed the whole of his Temper and Conduct
 was regulated by the Principles of that
 Religion, which he so well knew how to
 defend. And his strongest Desire was to
 approve himself to his great Master and
 Lord.

In private Life he was most regular and
 circumspect. Though he had a natural
 Warmth of Temper, yet, by maintaining
 a strict Discipline over his Passions, he
 never suffered it to appear in any improper
 Conduct: and he was temperate in all
 Things.

In discharging the Duties of social Life,
 all, who had any Connection or Intercourse
 with him, will bear Witness, how faithful
 and upright his Behaviour was ; how hu-

xxxviii P R E F A C E.

mane and compassionate, how friendly and kind, how well disposed to do Good, and to perform kind Offices to all, according to his Ability and Opportunity.

And in the nearer Relations of Life, how tender and affectionate a Husband, how loving a Brother and Uncle, how faithful a Guardian and Friend he was, they who stood in these Relations to him, have cordially acknowledged and will gratefully remember.

In more extensive Relations also, he was actuated by the same Goodness of Heart, and Benevolence of Affection. The Welfare of his Country lay near his Heart, and whatever concerned its Interest much affected him. As he had enlarged Views of the highest Concerns of Mankind, and of the Importance of Virtue and Religion to promote their Happiness; so with an unceasing Assiduity, he was ever ready to do his utmost in so worthy a Cause. The Sentiments and good Dispositions of Heart, with relation to this Subject, are most feelingly and pathetically expressed in his Conclusion of the *View of the principal Deistical Writers, &c.* which is an Address to *Deists*, and *professed Christians*; and in the Appendix to that Work, which contains Reflections on the present State of Things in these Nations.

By a happy Fortitude and Firmness of
Mind

Mind he was always the same Man; and could not be diverted by any Solicitation to act contrary to the deliberate Sense of his own Mind, and what he regarded as his Duty. He was a Man of the greatest Modesty, and the strictest Integrity, and knew not how to flatter or dissemble. At the same Time he behaved with great Prudence and Discretion, and took care not to give needless Offence to any. For one of his studious and retired Life, he had a great Knowledge of the World, which was useful to himself, and qualified him to give good Counsel to those that applied to him, in Cases that were important and perplexed.

In short, his Heart was filled with Love to God, and Zeal for his Glory: and, in Conformity to the Character of our blessed Saviour, he delighted to do the Will of his heavenly Father.—And in his Behaviour to Men, he was meek and humble, candid and condescending; and acted under the Influence of that Charity * *which suffereth long and is kind; which envieth not; which vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no Evil; rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth.*

It is very remarkable, that though the Fever, before mentioned, left him ex-

* I Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 6.

xl P R E F A C E.

tremely weak, yet he not only recovered his former Strength, but felt an Ease and Vigour, to which he had been a Stranger for many Years before ; going on in his public Ministrations with greater Life and Spirit, which was observed with Pleasure by all who attended on them : and he much sooner got over the Fatigue of public Service than formerly : so that his Youth seemed, in a manner, to be renewed. Such a Change was a kind of Miracle to him.

This improved State of Health continued till a few Months before his Death, when he felt Symptoms which were thought the Prefages of a painful chronical Disease. These Appearances, however, by skilful Advice and proper Medicines, abated. And as he was advised to walk as the properest Exercise for him, he got Cold in a moist Day, which he neglected till it fixed in his Breast, and raised an Inflammation there. And then, notwithstanding all that Art and Tendernefs could do, the Disorder soon overpowered his weak and feeble Frame. But his intellectual Powers were unimpaired and lively to the last. He had the Sentence of Death in himself, and had no Notion that he could recover, though his Friends, when he got any Ease, flattered themselves with the Hope of it. With a Head perfectly clear, and a Mind quite easy and composed, he gave Directions for what
he

he thought proper to be done ; and spent his Time in most affecting Exhortations to those who were about him, and in adoring the Wisdom and Goodness of Divine Providence towards him. He said, the Mercies he had received from God were more than could be numbered ; and though he had been exercised with various Afflictions, he trusted, that in the Issue they had proved real Blessings. He discovered great Humility in acknowledging his manifold Infirmities and Defects. “ Whatever others
 “ may think of me, said he, I, who have
 “ Reason to know myself best, am sensible
 “ I have made but a small Progress in
 “ Righteousness and true Holiness, or even
 “ in Knowledge and Learning, in Comparison of what I might have done, if I
 “ had been more careful to make the best
 “ Use of my Time, and of the Means and
 “ Opportunities that have been put into
 “ my Hands.” Thus lowly was this good Man ! And most devoutly did he celebrate the Riches of divine Grace through *Jesus Christ*. “ I give my dying Testimony” said he with a kind of Emotion, “ to the
 “ Truth of Christianity. The precious
 “ Promises of the Gospel are my Support
 “ and Consolation. They alone yield true
 “ Satisfaction in a dying Hour. I am not
 “ afraid to die. The Gospel of Christ
 “ hath raised me above the Fear of Death :
 “ for

“ for I know that my Redeemer liveth ;
 “ and that if this earthly House of our Ta-
 “ bernacle were dissolved, we have a Build-
 “ ing of God, an House not made with
 “ Hands, eternal in the Heavens.”

A little before he died, he was raised up, and with his own Hands took some Refreshment, and lay down again composed to rest: when in a few Minutes, without any Agony or Struggle, without Sigh or Groan, he quietly breathed his last, and fell asleep in the Lord the 16th of *January* 1766, and in the 75th Year of his Age.

The Goodness of Divine Providence is to be gratefully acknowledged for prolonging his valuable Life to such an advanced Age, which from the natural Weakness of his Constitution, and frequent Returns of bodily Disorders there was little Reason to hope.

This Reflection, together with the pleasing Circumstance, that he did not outlive himself, his Enjoyment, his Character, or his Usefulness, gives great Consolation. *And blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, that they may rest from their Labours, and their Works do follow them. Let me die the Death of the righteous, and let my last End be like his!*

ISAAC WELD.

CONTENTS

OF THE

FIRST VOLUME.

DISCOURSE I, II, III.

The Being and Perfections of God proved
from his Works.

ROMANS i. 20.

*For the invisible Things of him from the Cre-
ation of the World are clearly seen, being
understood by the Things that are made,
even his eternal Power and Godhead.*

Page 1.

The CONTENTS.

DISCOURSE IV, V.

On the Eternity of God.

PSALM XC. 2.

*Before the Mountains were brought forth, or
ever thou hadst formed the Earth, or the
World, even from everlasting to everlasting
thou art God. P. 77.*

DISCOURSE VI, VII.

On the Omnipresence of God.

PSALM CXXXIX. 7, 8, 9, 10.

*Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or
whither shall I flee from thy Presence? If
I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there:
if I make my Bed in Hell, behold, thou art
there: if I take the Wings of the Morn-
ing, and dwell in the uttermost Parts of the
Sea; even there shall thy Hand lead me,
and thy right Hand shall hold me. P. 109.*

The CONTENTS:

DISCOURSE VIII, IX.

On the Omniscience of God.

PSALM CXXXIX. 1.—6.

O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my Down-sitting and mine Up-rising, thou understandest my Thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my Path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my Ways. For there is not a Word in my Tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine Hand upon me. Such Knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it. P. 161.

DISCOURSE X.

On the Holiness of God.

HABAK. i. 13.

Thou art of purer Eyes than to behold Evil, and canst not look on Iniquity. P. 199.

The CONTENTS.

DISCOURSE XI, XII, XIII, XIV.

On the Goodness of God.

I JOHN iv. 8.

— *God is Love.* P. 225.

DISCOURSE XV, XVI.

On the Truth and Faithfulness of God.

PSALM cxvii. 2.

*The Truth of the Lord endureth for ever.
Praise ye the Lord.* P. 283.

DISCOURSE XVII.

On the Unchangeableness of God.

JAMES i. 17.

*Every good Gift, and every perfect Gift is
from above, and cometh down from the
Father of Lights, with whom is no Vari-
ableness, neither Shadow of Turning.*
P. 325.

The CONTENTS.

DISCOURSE XVIII.

On the Divine Happiness.

I TIM. vi. 15.

—*Who is the blessed and only Potentate,
the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.*

P. 345.

DISCOURSE XIX.

On the Divine Dominion.

I TIM. vi. 15.

—*Who is the blessed and only Potentate,
the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.*

P. 361.

DISCOURSE XX, XXI.

On doing all to the Glory of God.

I COR. x. 31.

*Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or what-
soever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.*

P. 379.

The CONTENT

DISCOURSE XXII, XXIII.

On being Followers of God.

EPHESIANS V. I.

*Be ye therefore Followers of God, as dear
Children.*

P. 411.

The

*The Being and Perfections of God
proved from his Works.*

DISCOURSE I.

ROMANS i. 20.

For the invisible Things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.

THAT there is a God that made the World and all Things in it, and that he is possessed of all possible Perfections, is a Principle that lieth at the Foundation of all Religion, and therefore it is of the highest Importance to us, to endeavour to get our Minds well established in the Belief of it. And these remarkable Words of the Apostle

[VOL. I.]

B

Paul,

2 DISCOURSE I.

Paul, direct us to that which hath been always accounted the strongest Evidence of this great Truth, and which is at the same Time the most obvious to the common Sense and Reason of Mankind. For, by considering the Works of Nature in this vast, beautiful; and well-ordered System of the Universe, we are naturally led to acknowledge a supreme, eternal, and absolutely perfect Cause and Author of all Things, infinitely powerful, wise, and good. This Argument hath been handled at large by many excellent Persons, with great Strength of Reason and Compass of Learning. But I shall content myself with treating it in a plain and popular Way: And, first, shall lay before you as briefly and clearly as I can, the Proofs of the Existence of God from the Works of Creation: And then shall proceed to take a summary View of those Excellencies and Perfections that essentially belong to the great Author and Parent of the Universe, and which, though invisible to the bodily Eye, are understood by the Things which he hath made.

I shall consider the Proofs of the Existence of God as manifested from the Works of Creation. And that we may the better feel the Force of this Argument, let us take a Rise from our own Existence,
and

DISCOURSE I. 3

and then proceed to a general Survey of the several Parts of this vast universal System as far as they come within our Notice, and observe how they all conspire to lead our Thoughts to a most wise and powerful Cause and Author, which we call God.

There is nothing of which we are more certain than that we ourselves have a Being. And upon surveying our own Frame, we find, that even this Body of Flesh which we carry about with us, beareth evident Marks of the most wise Contrivance. It consisteth of an amazing Variety of Parts, many of them exquisitely minute and fine, all disposed in the properest Situation for Convenience, Utility, or Beauty, most aptly corresponding to one another, and excellently fitted to their several Ends and Uses. When we observe the admirable Provision that is made for the Circulation of the Blood, for receiving and digesting the Food, and distributing proper Nourishment through the Body, as well as for ejecting and discharging what is superfluous; the curious Structure of the Organs, which are designed for carrying on the several Motions vital or spontaneous, or that minister to the Senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, &c. or which contribute to the Use of Speech, which is of such vast Advantage in human Life; when we

4 DISCOURSE I.

consider these Things, together with the Dignity of the human Form and Aspect, we can scarce help breaking forth into that rapturous Strain of the devout Psalmist, *I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* Psal. cxxxix. 14. There appeareth a Wisdom in all this that is perfectly astonishing. After the diligent Enquiries of the most sagacious Anatomists for a long Succession of Ages, there are still many Things in the human Body that are not yet fully discovered, and the more we know of them, the greater Matter we find for our Admiration.

But still more wonderful is the human Mind, or that noble Principle in us distinct from this corruptible Flesh, which is the Subject of the amazing Powers of Understanding, Will, Imagination, Memory, and of moral Qualities and Affections. We plainly find that we are capable of taking in numberless Ideas of Things, not only sensible and corporeal, but spiritual and invisible. We are capable of contemplating the Beauty, Order, and Harmony of the Universe, and of ascending in our Thoughts above this Earth, and the Things of this present visible World, to the absolutely perfect Being, who is unseen to an Eye of Sense, and is infinite and eternal. We are capable of reflecting and
comparing

DISCOURSE I. 5

comparing Things, of reasoning and judging, of looking back upon the past, of beholding Things present, and looking forward to the future. We are conscious to ourselves that we are moral Agents; that we have a Power of willing, and choosing, and of determining our own Actions, and passing a Judgment upon them; and that we have an inward Sense of the moral Differences of Things, and of what is beautiful and deformed in Affections and Actions, and which, where it is not depraved by corrupt Habits and Prejudices, carrieth us to approve and admire the Things that are just, and pure, and honest, and lovely, and virtuous, and praiseworthy, and to disapprove and condemn the contrary; and, in a Word, that we are endued with Faculties which, if duly improved, are capable of sublime Attainments in Knowledge and Virtue.

We farther find, that this noble thinking Substance is very closely united to the Body in this present State, in a Manner which we are not able to explain, and this Union is governed by certain Laws, and confined within certain Bounds and Limits, it extendeth to such a Degree and no farther, by virtue of which there is a wonderful Connection established between certain Motions and Impressions on the

Body, and certain Sensations and Affections in the Soul, and the Senses are adjusted and disposed in such a Manner as is most proper for the Use and Convenience of human Life. Man, considered in this View, is one of the most admirable Compositions in all Nature, nearly allied to the spiritual and material World, and having both united in himself.

A fresh Scene of Wonders openeth to us, when we farther consider the Care that is taken for continuing the human Species, the remarkable Distinction between the Sexes, and their mutual Propensions, and the admirable Provision that is made for nourishing and bringing up their Offspring. To which may be added, the kind and social Affections implanted in the human Heart, which tend to bind Men to one another, and shew that they are naturally designed and formed for Society, and for all the Offices of mutual Assistance and Benevolence.

Whilst upon considering these Things we are filled with Astonishment at our own Frame, we cannot but be sensible that it is in no Sense owing to ourselves, since we did not bring ourselves into Being. Nor was it owing to the Power and Skill of our Parents. They knew as little as we do how the curious Fabric

bric of our Bodies was formed and fashioned, and the several Parts of which it consisteth disposed in so excellent an Order. Much less were they the Authors and Contrivers of the Mind with its noble Faculties and Powers; nor did they appoint and establish the Laws of Union between both. They themselves came also into Being the same Way that we did, and their Bodies and Souls were formed and united in the same Manner, without their having any Part in it, or knowing how it was done. And the same Thing must be said of their Parents, and so on to the first Progenitors of the human Race, for to the first Progenitors we must come at last, and they no more than their Dependants were the proper Authors or Contrivers of their own Frame. Nor could it be originally owing to a blind Chance or Necessity. For what greater Absurdity can there possibly be, than to suppose that an unintelligent Chance or Necessity could be able to produce thinking intelligent Beings? We must therefore rise in our Thoughts to a most wise as well as powerful Agent or Cause, who contrived the admirable human Frame, in which there are such evident Marks of Wisdom and Design, who gave Existence to the first Parents of Mankind, from whom the rest

§ DISCOURSE I.

have proceeded, and who still presideth over the Production of this Race of Beings, according to the Laws and Order which he himself hath established.

Again, If we carry our Views to the Brute Animals, we see all around us a Variety of Beings that have Life and Sensation as well as we, but which plainly appear to be of an inferior Kind, not furnished with such noble intellectual Faculties, nor proper Subjects of moral Government, yet all of them endued with admirable Powers and Appetites, whereby they are enabled to distinguish what is good and useful to them from what is hurtful and prejudicial, and are strongly and steadily inclined to pursue the one and to avoid the other. Innumerable various as they are, there is proper Food provided for each of them, for receiving and digesting of which, the Fabric of their Body and Disposition of its Parts, is wonderfully disposed. To which may be added, the strong Inclinations whereby they are carried to propagate their several Species, the Apparatus of Parts fitted for it, and the wise and powerful Instincts whereby they are urged and directed to nourish and provide for their Young, and to take the properest Measures for that Purpose, and exercise a tender Care over them, whilst they stand
in

DISCOURSE I. 9

in need of that Care, and till they are able to shift for themselves. Who can without Wonder take a View of the numberless Tribes of Insects and Reptiles, four-footed Beasts, and flying Fowl, each of them provided with proper Organs and Instruments exactly alike in all the Individuals of the same Species, which are wonderfully adapted to their several Motions, and to that Kind of Life for which they are plainly designed? many of them of a surprising Smallness, and yet in that small Bulk furnished with an amazing Multiplicity of Parts most nicely and curiously contrived. Others of them to be admired for their Largeness and Strength, some for their Agility and Swiftmess, some for the Beauty of their Colours, or for the Fineness and comely Proportion of their Shapes; others for their Boldness and Courage, or for their Sagacity and Cunning. All of them subservient to Man, and contributing to his Pleasure, Use, and Entertainment, in such various Ways, that there could scarce be any tolerable living for us on Earth without them. It is manifest that they did not make themselves, nor did Man make them for his own Convenience, nor could they be the Effects of any blind undefigning Nature, but must owe their Existence to a superior intelligent

gent

gent Cause. For if those Engines that are the Effects of human Art and Contrivance, plainly shew Wisdom and active Intelligence in the Cause that produced them; how much more must this be acknowledged concerning the Brute Animals, the Mechanism of whose Bodies is incomparably more curious than any Engines that were ever invented by Man, and who are endued with the wonderful Powers of Life, Self-motion, and Sensation, together with various Instincts, entirely distinct from, and vastly superior to all the Powers of Mechanism, and the utmost Efforts of human Art or Skill. They must therefore have proceeded from a Power and Wisdom that exceedeth our Comprehension. And upon comparing them with Man, to whom they are subordinate, and whom they resemble in what regardeth the sensitive Life, we are led to conclude that the same most wise and powerful Being that made Man, did also make these inferior Animals, and gave them their several Powers and Instincts, whereby they are fitted for the Enjoyment of that Life which was designed them, and for being useful to Man, who is fitted by his Reason for exercising a Dominion over them, and was evidently intended to be the principal Inhabitant of this lower World.

From

DISCOURSE I. II

From Man and the Brute Animals let us turn our Views to this Earth which we inhabit; and here we find we are placed in a World amply furnished for the Suf-tenance and Entertainment of the various Kinds of living Creatures that dwell upon it, and especially for the Use and Delight of Mankind. Its Surface is generally overspread with an agreeable Verdure, and diversified with Hills and Vallies, Moun-tains and Plains, Fields, Woods, and Groves, Rivers and Fountains, which are in their several Ways of manifold Use, as well as contribute to the Beauty and Variety of Prospect. Its Bowels are stored with vast Magazines of Metals, Stones, and Minerals, of great Advantage to the Service of human Life, and capable of being employed to a thousand Uses. But especially it should fill us with Astonish-ment to survey the unspeakable Variety of Plants, Trees, Flowers, and Grain, arising in numberless beautiful Forms out of the dark Bosom of the Earth, to which they adhere by their Roots, and from which they derive their Nourishment, all spring- ing up from their several Seeds, according to constant and settled Laws, which they themselves know nothing of, and which yet they invariably pursue. They are not endued like the Animals with Perception
and

12 DISCOURSE I.

and Sensation, and yet have an inferior Kind of Life whereby they vegetate and grow, and rise up through a gradual and orderly Progression into Maturity. Nothing can be more admirable than the great Variety of Vessels with which they are furnished, the Contrivance of which is inimitably curious, and which are all so wonderfully similar in all the same Species, that no Art, no Power or Skill of Man is able to effect the like. Their Vegetation, their Growth, their Productions of Leaves, Blossoms, Buds, Fruits, &c. are all conducted by the wisest Rules, and kindly contrived for the Use of the living Creatures that dwell upon the Earth, for Food and Medicine, for Covert, Shade, and Pleasure. *Grass groweth for the Cattle, and Herb, or Grain, for the Service of Man*, as the Psalmist speaks, *Psal. civ. 14.* The former shooteth up in vast Quantities all over the Earth of its own accord, and without Cultivation, because designed to be Food for the Brute Creatures, who cannot cultivate the Ground; the latter furnisheth an agreeable and nourishing Food for Man, but then it is so ordered, that it is not ordinarily produced or fitted for his Use without Care and Pains in cultivating the Ground, for which he is well qualified, though the Brutes are not. Nor hath the
Earth

DISCOURSE I. 13

Earth after so long a Succession of Ages lost its Fertility. There is Provision made for constantly repairing and renewing it, and even the Corruption of those Bodies that lie and rot upon its Surface, is by a remarkable Contrivance made to contribute to this Purpose. It were Madness to suppose that all this is properly and originally owing to the Earth itself, which is a dull heavy Mass of senseless Matter, incapable in itself of doing or contriving any Thing, or that it is by an undefigning Chance that it emitteth such a Variety of Productions, in such a regular Way, and according to fixed Laws. These are evidently the Appointments of a most wise Agent, who, as he made Man, and the several Kinds of Brute Animals, did also contrive the curious Mechanism of Plants, and did form the Earth, and dispose it into the Order in which we now behold it, and hath liberally furnished it with every Thing that might render it a commodious Habitation for the Creatures that live upon it. All these Things are so excellently adapted to one another, and have such a mutual Relation and Dependence, as plainly shew them to be the Work and Contrivance of one wise and beneficent Author and Disposer.

While

While we are surveying this Earth, another amazing Scene openeth to our View, the great and wide Sea, that huge Collection of Waters, which, by a wonderful Provision, is every where impregnated with vast Quantities of Salt, and is subjected to a regular Ebbing and Flowing, whereby it is kept in constant Motion, and is preserved from stagnating and putrefying; which might be of the worst Consequence. This, as well as the Land, is stored with a numberless Variety of living Creatures, many of them of huge Bulk and Strength, all of them wonderful in their several Forms, and framed in such a Manner, and their Organs so disposed, as plainly shews that they are originally fitted and designed to live in the watry Element, which is mortal to other earthly Creatures. These, as well as the Land Animals, are of Use to Mankind. Besides which, the Sea itself is of great Advantage to us, not only as it serveth for maintaining an Intercourse between the most distant Nations, but as it is the great Fund of Vapours, which are continually exhaled by the Heat of the Sun in vast Quantities from its Surface, and being freed from their Salts in a Manner which we are not able to explain, are raised up into the Air; from whence they descend upon the
Earth,

DISCOURSE I. 15

Earth, fertilizing and moistening it, and furnishing Drink to living Creatures, as well as constant Supplies to Fountains and Rivers which again run into the Sea. Thus there is a perpetual Circulation of Waters from the Earth to the Ocean, from the Ocean to the Earth again; by which constant and regular Circulation, both the Sea and Rivers are preserved, and such a Proportion is maintained between them, that neither the one nor the other, in a long Course of Ages, is considerably either increased or diminished.

And here the same Reflections recur that were made on the other Parts of this Globe. All this plainly pointeth to one original Cause of great Wisdom as well as Power, who made the Earth with the several Kinds of Plants and Animals upon it, and did also form the Sea, and stored it with innumerable living Creatures both small and great. To him it is owing that the Water, though lighter than the Earth, is not spread all over it like the Air, which would prove destructive both to Plants and the greater Part of Animals, but hath proper Receptacles provided for it, where it is laid up as in Store-houses, and is conveyed by innumerable Canals through the Earth in such a Manner as may render it of the greatest Use. And the

16 DISCOURSE I.

the Shores, with the Sand lodged there in inconceivable Quantities, are so disposed as to form a Kind of natural Dike, the most effectual that can be to repress the Fury of the boisterous Ocean, so that *though the Waters thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it.* Jer. v. 22.

From the Earth and Sea let us ascend in our Thoughts to the Air which encompasseth this Globe, and hath a manifest Relation to it. And here we behold new Marks of the most wise and astonishing Contrivance, though after all our Researches it is but little that we understand of the Nature of that wonderful Fluid which we call Air, yet its great Use and absolute Necessity to the Subsistence of Man, and of all other Animals upon Earth, is obvious to the most superficial Enquirer. It is the vital Element in which we breathe, and without which we can scarce live a Moment; and it is necessary not only to the Life of Animals, but to the Vegetation of Plants, and produceth numberless surprising Effects upon all earthly Bodies. And is it possible here not to acknowledge a most wise presiding Mind, who hath so constituted the Air, that though it hath in it a Mixture of a strange Variety of Ingredients, yet it ordinarily retaineth that
Quality

Quality which rendereth it so useful and necessary to Life, and who hath caused it to be stretched forth over the whole Earth and Sea, as being of universal Advantage, and hath furnished all Animals, and even Plants, with curious Vessels most exquisitely contrived for this very Purpose, that they may receive the Air, and have the Benefit of it? The Air contributeth not only to our Life and Health, but in numberless Instances to our Convenience and Pleasure. It refresheth us by its balmy Influence, and is the great Means of conveying Sounds, not only the Sound of Words whereby Conversation is maintained among Men, but all the pleasing Airs of Music and Harmony to the Ear, which is accordingly provided with Organs admirably fitted to receive them.

The Air may also be considered in another View, as the Region of Vapours and Meteors. There is the balancing of the Clouds, which are wonderfully suspended in the Air, and form a fair and ample Canopy over our Heads, and at proper Seasons are dissolved, not breaking at once upon us in mighty Spouts and Torrents, which would be of very bad Consequence, but descending upon the Earth in Drops of Rain or Dew. There are the Treasures of Snow and Hail, and there the

Lightnings blaze, and the Thunders roar, which are of Use to purify the Air, as well as to strike astonished Mortals with a religious Awe of the above Power and Majesty. There the Winds are formed which are so necessary to waft the Clouds and Vapours to the most distant Parts, to fan and clear the Air, and to scatter and dispel noxious Streams, as well as for carrying on Navigation and Commerce, and for a thousand other Uses. From the dreadful Effects which these Things sometimes produce, we may judge what a miserable Case we should be in, if they were left to a blind and giddy Chance. But it is our Comfort to think they are under a most wise and powerful Director, who at first formed and appointed, and still governeth the Meteors and the vast Army of Vapours floating in the Air, and regulateth them by such Laws, and in such a Manner, that they are sometimes made Use of by him for executing his righteous Judgments, so upon the whole they are greatly beneficial to the Earth and to Mankind. How should we admire and adore him, who, according to the beautiful Language of holy Writ, *maketh small the Drops of Water, which the Clouds drop, and distil upon Man abundantly; who giveth Snow like Wool, and scattereth the hoar Frost like Ashes;*

DISCOURSE I. 19

Ashes; who weigheth the Winds, and bringeth them forth out of his Treasuries; who thundereth marvellously with his Voice; and, with regard to many other Appearances in those airy Regions, doeth great Things which we cannot comprehend!

And now upon this short and general Survey of our Globe, in which there are so many Things that shew the most admirable Contrivance, we are almost irresistibly led to acknowledge a most wise and mighty Intelligence, that formed Man, the Brute Animals, the Earth, the Sea, the Air, so wonderfully corresponding to one another, and all concurring to make up one habitable Globe: Nor could any one of them be wanting without great Detriment and Prejudice to the whole.

And yet our Reflections must not stop here. It is evident that what we have been considering is but Part of a larger System, to which it hath a manifest Relation. This Earth of ours, with its surrounding Atmosphere, is but an inconsiderable Point compared with this vast and spacious Universe, beyond Imagination great and magnificent. On every Side of us we behold a wide and glorious Expanse, and in it many shining Orbs, especially that glorious Body the Sun, which enlighteneth, warmeth, and animateth our

C 2 World,

World, and without whose chearing Influences and Rays, Life, Vegetation, and Motion, would soon be extinguished in all Animals and Plants, and this whole Earth and Sea become one uselefs Lump of congealed Matter. Who can without Astonishment consider the Light, which is of a Nature so inimitably fine and subtile, so active and penetrating? It shooteth down from the Sun to the Earth, an immense Distance, with a Swiftnefs exceeding all human Imagination, and is capable of numberlefs Reflections and Refractions, performed according to certain fixed Laws, whereby all the Beauties of Colours, and a Variety of the most pleasing and transporting Scenes are presented to our Eyes, which are accordingly most exquisitely contrived and formed for receiving them. It is manifest that the Light is made for the Eye, and the Eye for Light, the one of these would be uselefs without the other, and both are to be ascribed to the same wise and powerful Cause and Author.

It is wisely ordered that the Earth and Sun are placed in so commodious a Situation towards one another, neither too near, nor too remote, and the annual and diurnal Motions so regulated, as to produce the grateful Vicissitudes of Day and Night, and the stated orderly Returns of the Seasons,

DISCOURSE I. 21

sons, both for our Use and for our Pleasure.

It is also a wise and kind Provision, that the Moon is appointed to perform its monthly Course round the Earth in such a Manner as to yield to us a comfortable and refreshing Light in the Absence of the Sun, which Light it deriveth from that glorious Luminary, and reflecteth to our Earth. It correcteth the cold Damps of the Night, and hath a great Influence on the Tides, and on the Bodies of Animals and Plants.

The other Planets also perform their several Courses at proper Distances from the Earth and Sun, according to an established Rule and Order, from which they have not deviated through so long a Succession of Ages. And now it needeth but little Reflection to convince us that these heavenly Bodies, the Sun, Moon, and Planets, did not form themselves, or assign to themselves the Stations they hold in the Universe, or the Courses they pursue. Nor could the wonderful Composition of those huge Orbs, the nice Adjustment of their Motions and Distances, their mutual Relations and Dependencies, the amazing Constancy and Regularity of their Courses, and the wise and steady Laws by which they are governed, any Deviation

from which would soon bring the whole System into Confusion, be possibly the Effects of a blind Chance, or of any unintelligent undefigning Cause. We are apt to admire an artificial Sphere in which are represented, though in a very imperfect Manner, the regular Motions of the Sun and Planets, and their Situation with respect to one another, as a curious Piece of Art which sheweth a great deal of Skill and Contrivance. But how infinitely doth this fall short of the Wisdom as well as Power that was requisite to form these stupendous Bodies, to dispose them in their proper Situations, to appoint them their several Courses, and to preserve and maintain them in that just and beautiful Order, which is most for the Advantage and Harmony of the whole! Upon considering all this, we are led by the clearest Principles of Reason to conclude, that as well the Sun and planetary Orbs, as the Earth, Sea, concur to make one great System, of which this Globe of ours is but a Part, owe their Existence and Preservation to one and the same most wise, powerful, and beneficent Author. And if we farther consider the Comets which now and then appear with their blazing Train, whose Courses, though seemingly irregular, and different from those of other Planets,

DISCOURSE I. 23

yet according to the most accurate Observations are all governed by fixed Laws, and especially if we raise our Views to the innumerable fixed Stars, removed from us at a Distance which exceedeth all human Computation, each of them acknowledged by all that consider these Things with Attention to be huge Orbs of Light, Bodies of prodigious Magnitude and Splendor, and probably so many Suns, attended with surrounding Planets, this openeth a new Scene of Wonders still more grand and astonishing than what we have been now considering. Our Minds are swallowed up in the boundless Extent of the Works of Nature. And what a vast Idea must this give us of the Greatness of the Universe, much more of the Power, Majesty, and Wisdom of the glorious Author, *by whose Word the Heavens were made, and all the Host of them by the Breath of his Mouth!*

Thus it appeareth, that whithersoever we turn our Eyes we meet with visible illustrious Proofs and Evidences of a Deity. I have considered these Things only in a general Way, without entering into the Depths of Philosophy; but a more distinct and accurate Inspection of them would reveal innumerable new Wonders to convince and astonish us. And yet even this slight and

general View strikes the Mind with great Force. All Nature proclaimeth through all its Works with a Voice intelligible to all Mankind who will duly attend to it, that there is a God. Every where may we observe the plainest Marks and Characters of Wisdom and Contrivance; and since Matter is in itself incapable of Understanding and Design, and therefore can have no Wisdom of its own to order and direct it; this is a demonstrative Proof that these Things must have been effected by the Wisdom and Power of another Agent, distinct from Matter, and vastly superior to it. And indeed one would think it scarce possible for any Man to consider this vast stupendous Frame so admirably contrived in all its Parts, and which is preserved and governed by such wise and constant Laws, together with the innumerably various Beings it containeth, with all their Faculties and Powers, Capacities and Instincts; I say, one would think it scarce possible for any Man to consider all this with Attention, and not believe it to be the Work of a most wise as well as almighty Author. To ascribe all this beautiful and well-ordered Universe, and all the Orders of Beings in it, many of which are endued with Knowledge and Intelligence, to a giddy thoughtless Chance, and lucky Jumble

ble

DISCOURSE I. 25

ble of Atoms, or to a blind unintelligent Nature or Necessity, Words which, as they are used in this Case, are without Sense and Meaning, and really signify nothing at all, rather than to a wise and understanding Mind, is absurd to a Degree of Extravagance. A Man of plain sound Sense, who hath not his Head turned with a false and vain Philosophy, would be apt to think that it could never have entered into the Heart of any Person whatsoever to have imagined such a Thing. Especially since that Man would be looked upon as scarce in his Senses, that upon beholding and examining a well-built House, a curious Watch, a well-written Book, or any admired Piece of Mechanism made by human Art, should seriously and in good earnest attribute it not to the Skill and Contrivance of any Man, or any other intelligent Agent, but to an undefigning Chance or senseless Necessity.

Justly therefore doth the Psalmist pronounce him a Fool that *hath said in his Heart, There is no God.* Psal. xiv. 1. And the Apostle here representeth those that do not acknowledge and adore God and his Perfections, which are clearly seen from the Creation of the World, being understood by the Things that are made,

as

26 DISCOURSE I.

as absolutely without Excuse. *Rom. i. 20.* Nor do the seeming Irregularities in some Parts of the Universe in the least weaken the Argument or Evidence. For since we find innumerable Things that plainly argue a Wisdom and Skill infinitely superior to ours, we ought to make the same Supposition concerning those Things, the Design or Use of which we do not at present see. It is certainly highly rational and becoming the Modesty of such short-sighted Creatures as we are, to attribute any Defects or Irregularities we may imagine we observe in any Part of the Work of God in this vast Universe, to the narrow Comprehension of our own Understandings, which we cannot but be conscious of in a thousand Instances. How many Things were found fault with by the Epicureans and other ancient atheistical Philosophers in the Frame of the World, that upon the further Improvements which have been made in the Knowledge of Nature in these latter Ages, have appeared to be contrived with admirable Wisdom! And we may justly conclude, that other Things, which now we cannot precisely assign a Reason of, would appear to be very wisely ordered, if we had a just Comprehension of the whole, and saw all Things in their mutual Connection and Harmony. As to the Disorders

Disorders of the moral World, no Argument can be properly drawn from thence against the Existence and Perfections of the supreme Being, since they only arise from the Abuse that reasonable Creatures make of the excellent Faculties with which they are endued, and of the Liberty that belongeth to them as moral Agents. And if we regard this present Life as a State of Trial, and take a future World into the Account, there is great Reason to apprehend that when the whole moral System is compleated, all the Difficulties which now puzzle us shall be adjusted and cleared, and the Wisdom and Righteousness of God be made illustriously manifest, even in those Things that now have the most discouraging Appearance.

I shall conclude this Discourse with that noble Address to God, Neh. ix. 5. 6. *Blessed be thy glorious Name, which is exalted above all Blessing and Praise! Thou, even thou, art Lord alone, thou hast made Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens with all their Host, the Earth and all Things that are therein, the Sea and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all, and the Host of Heaven worshippeth thee!*

*The Being and Perfections of God
proved from his Works.*

DISCOURSE II.

ROMANS i. 20.

For the invisible Things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.

IN my former Discourse on these Words I laid before you the Proofs of the Existence of God from the Consideration of his wonderful Works. Taking a Rise from our own Bodies and Souls, we took a general Survey of this vast, beautiful, and well-ordered Universe, the Earth, the Sea, the Air, the heavenly Orbs, the Sun, the Moon, and Stars, and it appeared that they all uniformly concur to lead our Minds to the Acknowledgment of one supreme intelligent Cause and Author.

But it is not sufficient to believe that there is a God, if we do not endeavour to get our Hearts filled with just
and

30 DISCOURSE II.

and worthy Sentiments of his infinite Excellencies. And the same Arguments that lead us to acknowledge his Existence, do equally lead us to acknowledge that this great Author of the Universe must be possessed of all possible Perfections. There is no Conclusion more obvious than this, that he that hath spread such an Abundance of Glory through his Works in this World, which he hath created, must have an unbounded Fulness of Excellency and Perfection in himself. And this is what the Apostle here signifieth, by declaring, *that the invisible Things of God from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made. The invisible Things of God*, is his infinite Essence and Perfections which are not the Objects of our Sight, or of any of our Senses. And accordingly he adds, *even his eternal Power and Godhead*. He expressly mentioneth *his eternal Power*, and under the Word *Godhead* may be comprehended his other divine Perfections, and as the Result of all, his supreme incomparable Majesty, Glory, and Dominion.

It is no Objection against this, that the divine Essence and Perfections are not visible to the bodily Eye. This only sheweth that he is a Spirit, not Matter or Body, which he must be, if we could see him with our Eyes. But his Being and Perfections

tions

tions are nevertheless real for his being invisible. Though they are not seen with an Eye of Sense, yet they are discernable to the Eye of the Mind, *being understood by the Things that are made*, i. e. by the Effects in the Works of Creation. And nothing can yield a nobler or more useful Subject for our Contemplations. I shall therefore proceed to take a summary View of those Perfections which essentially belong to the supreme original Cause and Author of all Things. And such a short and general Consideration of them may be of great Advantage, that by placing them together in a close and comprehensive View, their mutual Connection and Harmony may more convincingly appear.

And first. The first Thing I would observe is, that this great original Cause of all Things, the God that made the World, and all that in it is, existed necessarily from everlasting. This is plainly signified here when the Apostle speaketh of *his eternal Power and Godhead*, as *being understood by the Things that are made*. For *eternal Power and Godhead* necessarily suppose eternal Existence. That something must have existed from everlasting, is as certain as it is that any Thing now existeth, because otherwise, nothing could ever have come into Being. And indeed none ever was so absurd as to deny that something must

must have existed from all Eternity. The Atheist is forced to acknowledge this whether he will or no, and being unwilling to own an eternal wise intelligent Cause, most absurdly ascribeth Eternity to dull senseless Matter. But if Matter alone were eternal, how could Life, or Intelligence, or active Power have ever come into Being? Or how could Matter, or that Supposition be subject to so many Changes and Alterations as we see it is, since, if it existed necessarily and independently, it cannot be conceived that any Thing could make an Impression upon it, so as to move or alter it? There must in that Case have been from everlasting, and so should have continued to everlasting, the same unvaried State or Appearance of Things, without Motion or Life, Sensation or Intelligence, none of which originally belong to Matter. But this is contrary to undeniable Fact and Experience. In all Things that come under our Notice we may observe convincing Proofs of their having had a Beginning of their Existence. With regard to ourselves, we are conscious that it is but a few Years since we came into Being. The same must be said of the whole Race of Mankind, which it is demonstrable could not have been from everlasting upon this Earth; and there are many Things which plainly shew that they
are

DISCOURSE II. 33

are comparatively but of a late Original. The Earth itself, the Sea, the Air, bear upon them Characters of Mutability and Imperfection, which make it evident that they did not exist of themselves from everlasting. And the same Thing may be justly concluded concerning the glorious Bodies that perform their Courses and Revolutions in the vast Spaces around us. But when we rise beyond these Things to the great Author of the Universe, as we must acknowledge that he had an Existence before any Part of this visible World, which is his Contrivance and Workmanship, so we are naturally led to conclude, that he never had any Beginning of his Being. Let us pursue our Thoughts never so far through the Series of subordinate second Causes, we must unavoidably come at length to something which was itself uncaused, and must therefore have been self-existent, or have existed necessarily from everlasting. And this Necessity of Existence, as it cannot be owing to any external Cause, must have its Reason and Ground in the Nature of the Thing itself. It can therefore be owing to Nothing but to the peculiar Excellency and Perfection of its own Essence, which is such that it is not possible that it should ever have either a Beginning or an End of its Existence. And whatsoever is thus self-existent, or existeth necessarily of

itself, must be independent and self-sufficient. As it was not beholden to any other for its Being or Perfections, so there is no other on whom it can be supposed in any Case to depend. It subsisteth wholly and only of itself, and standeth not in Need of foreign Assistance or Support. And for the same Reason that it is self-sufficient and independent, it is unchangeable too. That which existeth necessarily from everlasting cannot reasonably be supposed to be liable to Alteration or Change, since it is neither obnoxious to the Power or Influence of any external Cause, nor can have any internal Weakness or Principle of Change in itself, and therefore must continue to everlasting, the same that it was from everlasting.

It may be farther added, that to be self-existent includeth absolute Perfection in its Idea. All derivative Beings are limited in one respect or other, and the Reason is plain, because they owe their Existence, and their Perfections, their Nature and Properties, to a superior Cause. But that Being which existeth necessarily and of itself, cannot be limited. For it hath nothing to restrain or limit it from without, since it hath no superior Cause to determine it to any particular Portion or Quantity of Being or Excellence, nor hath

hath it any Restriction or Limitation arising from within, or from its own Nature, since its existing necessarily could be only owing to the absolute and unparalleled Excellency of its own Nature. And what imaginable Reason can be given why the necessarily existent Being, that hath nothing to set Bounds to it, should have some Perfections and not all?

And now it appeareth what an eminent and glorious Prerogative this of eternal and necessary Existence is, and that there must needs be an infinite and unconceivable Difference between a Being to which this Privilege belongeth, and a Being that hath nothing of itself, but deriveth all that it is and hath from the Will and Power of another. We should therefore, in the inward Estimation of our Minds, put an immense Difference between the eternal and necessarily existent Jehovah, and all other Beings whatsoever; acknowledge his unequalled Glory and Majesty, that he is, and there is none other besides him. He is the τὸ ὄν, as one of the most eminent of the ancient Philosophers called him, the Being, by Way of Eminency, *that which is or existeth*, viz. necessarily of himself. Whereas other Things have only a precarious contingent Being, and therefore, in Comparison of God, they

D 2

can

can scarce be said to be at all. What the Prophet saith concerning all the Nations of the Earth, may be said concerning the whole Compass of created Beings, that in the Sight of God, and as compared with him they are *as Nothing*, yea even *less than Nothing, and Vanity*, as it is most emphatically expressed, *Isa. xl. 17.* How justly is he therefore the Object of our profoundest Reverence! When we set ourselves to contemplate him, we soon find our Thoughts swallowed up in a bottomless Abyfs, which no created Understanding can sound or fathom. This may teach us what an humble Modesty becometh us in our Enquiries concerning the Deity. How soon are we lost in the amazing Depths of Eternity and Self-existence! How can temporary, successive, contingent Beings, that are but of Yesterday, form a just and adequate Notion of that infinite, eternal, and unchangeable Being, who always existeth necessarily of himself, by the singular Prerogative of his own most perfect Nature. It is useful for us frequently to turn our Thoughts this Way, the better to affect our Hearts with a Sense of the infinite Distance between him and us. We should be even as nothing in our own Eyes, and should sink into the very Dust before him with the most awful and prostrate

DISCOURSE II. 37

prostrate Veneration. His Eternity and Self-existence, (which includeth, as hath been shewn, Self-sufficiency, Independency, and Immutability,) lieth at the Foundation of all his other Attributes, and giveth them infinite Force. Hence the Apostle speaketh here of his eternal Power and Godhead. His Power, his Wisdom, his Goodness, all his Perfections, in a Word, his Godhead is eternal. And this rendereth him the proper Object both of our humblest Adoration, and of our steady Trust and Dependence.

And accordingly the holy Scriptures in this, at well as other Instances, teach us to form the most worthy Conceptions of the supreme Being. He is there represented as describing himself by that glorious Character, *I am*, and *I am that I am*; which is generally and justly supposed to have a particular Reference to his necessary eternal Existence and Unchangeableness. Exod. iii. 14. *God said unto Moses, I am that I am: And he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the Children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you.* The Septuagint render it, 'I am he that is, or existeth.' And again in the latter Part of the Verse, 'He that is hath sent me unto you.' The same Thing is generally supposed to be signified by the sacred Name *Jehovah*, God's most glorious

38 DISCOURSE II.

peculiar Title. That sublime Passage in the Prayer of *Moses* giveth a noble Idea of God's Eternity and Immutability. *Before the Mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the Earth and the World; even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.* Psal. xc. 2. To the same Purpose that admirable Address of the Psalmist, Psal. cii. 25, 26, 27. *Of old hast thou laid the Foundation of the Earth, and the Heavens are the Work of thine Hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old as a Garment; as a Vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy Years shall have no End.* He is described, Rev. i. 4. under the Character of *him which is, and which was, and which is to come*; as comprehending all the Differences of Time in his own permanent and boundless Duration. We are taught to ascribe Glory to him, as the *King eternal, immortal, invisible.* 1 Tim. i. 17. Yea, we are told, that he *only hath Immortality,* 1 Tim. vi. 16. *i. e.* he only hath it originally and necessarily, and independently in himself, so that it is impossible for him ever not to have been, or ever to cease to be, which cannot be said of any other Being whatsoever. And it is declared, that *with him is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning.* Jam. i. 17.

DISCOURSE II. 39

Secondly, Another Thing that we are to believe concerning God the great Author of the Universe, is, that he is immense and omnipresent. Indeed this seemeth to have an inseparable Connection with Eternity and necessary Existence, For, as hath been already observed, that which existeth necessarily of itself, and hath no Dependence on any external Cause, cannot have any Bounds or Limits of its Essence. It may therefore be justly argued, that by the same Necessity by which God existeth any where, he existeth every where; and as there is no Time in which he doth not exist, so there is no Space in which he is not present. But that which giveth us the most satisfying Conviction and Assurance of the Immensity of the divine Essence, and tendeth to impress our Minds with the most affecting Sense of it, is the amazing Greatness of the vast Universe which he hath made. The unlimited Amplitude of his Essence, as well as the Extent of his Power, may be fairly concluded from the Creation of the World. Hence *St. Paul*, in his admirable Discourse to the *Athenians*, representeth it as a Truth obvious to the common Sense of Mankind, that *God that made the World, and all Things that are therein,—is not far from every one of us—for in him we live, and move, and*

40 DISCOURSE II.

have our Being. Acts xvii. 24, 27, 28. There cannot be a more natural Thought than this. If the World which we behold be of such a wonderful Extent, so that we are not able to assign its Bounds, how great and immense must that glorious Being be who at first made, and who still preserveth and upholdeth this universal System! It is not reasonable to suppose, that any Corner of the Creation is destitute of the Presence of the great Author of it, who keepeth together the whole stupendous Frame, and whose Influence extendeth to every Part of it. What we commonly call the Course of Nature, is, in Reality, owing to the constant Influence of the Almighty, acting upon this wonderful System, and upon all the Parts of Matter, according to a settled Order which his own Wisdom hath established. And since he operateth every where, he must be present every where. And indeed a Sense of this seemeth to be so natural to the human Mind, that it is no easy Thing to shake it off. Not to produce the Testimonies of the best of the ancient heathen Philosophers, who were very express in their Acknowledgments to this Purpose, the Prayers that are offered, the Oaths for Confirmation, and for putting an End to Strife, so usual among all Nations, and
all

DISCOURSE II. 41

all the Acts of religious Homage and Devotion, proceed upon this Principle, that the Deity is present with us, and observeth every Thing that passeth. And the maintaining a constant Sense of this upon our Minds, is of very great Importance for influencing and governing our whole Temper and Conduct. It hath a manifest Tendency to engage us to exercise a continual Watchfulness, and to do every Thing we do as in his Sight, and with a Regard to his Presence and Approbation. To consider that God is ever present, yieldeth great Comfort and Encouragement to good Men, and is one of the most effectual Checks and Restraints to Vice and Wickedness.

Accordingly this Attribute of the divine Immensity and Omnipresence is admirably described in the sacred Writings. *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, saith the devout Psalmist, and whither shall I flee from thy Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven thou art there; and if I make my Bed in Hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the Wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermost Parts of the Sea, even there shall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand shall hold me.* Psal. cxxxix. 7, 8, 9, 10. *Solomon*, in his excellent Address to God at the Dedication of the Temple, expresseth himself thus,
Behold,

Behold, the Heaven, and Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee, but much less this House which I have builded? 1 Kings viii.

27. God is introduced as declaring concerning himself, *Am I a God at Hand, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret Places, that I should not see him? Do not I fill Heaven and Earth?* Jer. xxiii. 23, 24.

Thirdly, Another Thing included in the Idea of God is that he is almighty. This may be justly argued from his being the eternal and self-existent Being; for as such he must necessarily have an independent absolute Fulness of Life, and active Power or Energy, originally and essentially in himself, without any Thing to bound and limit it; whereas, Power cannot but be limited in all derivative Beings. But the most obvious and irresistible Demonstration of God's Omnipotency is that which ariseth from the Consideration of his having created this vast System of the Universe. Hence the Apostle here speaking of the invisible Things of God, which are understood by the Things that are made, particularly mentions his eternal Power. It is natural for every Man to conclude that the Author of this stupendous Frame, and of all the Orders of Beings contained in it, must certainly be almighty. What

DISCOURSE II. 43

an amazing Power must he be possessed of, who at first formed and still sustaineth this huge terrestrial Globe, the Earth, the Sea, and all Things that are therein! But how much greater an Idea must it give us of his Power, if we consider him as having made Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens, with all their Host, the Sun, Moon, and Planets, with all the Constellations of fixed Stars, and all the Beings of whatsoever Kind that dwell in those vast Regions, the Extent of which transcendeth all human Imagination! The creating all Things out of Nothing, *i. e.* giving Being to those Things that had no Existence before, though it doth not imply a Contradiction, and therefore cannot be proved to be impossible, yet is certainly the noblest Exertion of Omnipotency that can be conceived. And the Scripture, to heighten our Ideas of the divine Power, representeth God as having done this with a wonderful Facility. *By the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made, and all the Host of them by the Breath of his Mouth.* Psal. xxxiii. 6. He only said, *Let there be Light, and there was Light.* Gen. i. 3. And so with regard to the other Parts of the Creation, he *spake, and it was done.* Psal. xxxiii. 9. Justly therefore it is declared, that *with God all Things are possible.*
Matt.

Matt. xix. 26. He can do every Thing that is the Object of Power, every Thing but what includeth a Repugnancy in its Power, or would suppose an Imperfection in the Agent. And indeed, what can be impossible to him that created the World? *Behold, saith the Prophet, thou hast made the Heavens and the Earth by thy great Power and stretched-out Arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.* Jer. xxxii. 17. If all the Power and Strength of Men and Angels, and of all the Orders of Beings throughout the Universe, were collected into one, what a mighty and stupendous Power must that be! And it is all derived from God, and is indeed but a small Part of the Fulness of Power that is in him. *Once hath God spoken, saith the Psalmist, twice have I heard this, that Power belongeth unto God.* Psal. lxii. 11. *i. e.* It belongeth to him, and to him alone, originally, essentially, independently, in all its unlimited Extent, and without the least Mixture of Weakness, some Degree of which there is in all created Beings. Justly therefore is he frequently described to us in Scripture under the Character of the Lord God Almighty. And it is absolutely necessary to a Life of Religion, that we should have a Sense of this glorious Attribute deeply impressed upon our Minds.

There

DISCOURSE II. 45

There is nothing that hath a greater Tendency to create in us a sacred Awe of the divine Majesty, a Dread of exposing ourselves to his Displeasure, and an earnest Desire to secure an Interest in his Favour, and also to beget in us a firm and steady Confidence in him, amidst the greatest Dangers and Difficulties. How comforting is it to be persuaded, that *what he hath promised he is able also to perform.* Rom. iv. 21. and that, as St. Paul nobly and emphatically expresseth it, *he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.* Eph. iii. 20. A wonderful Passage, whereby it is signified, that the Power of God far transcendeth not only all Expression, but even our lightest Conceptions, the utmost Flight of the most unbounded Imagination!

Fourthly, Infinite Knowledge or Omnipresence is another of the divine Attributes which Reason teacheth us to ascribe to God, the great Author and Lord of the Universe. That Knowledge is a Perfection, and the Want of it a Defect, and that Beings which have Intelligence are of a more noble and excellent Kind than those that are destitute of it, will not be denied. And therefore it were the greatest Absurdity to suppose the most perfect and excellent of all Beings, the first original Cause and Au-
thor

46. DISCOURSE II.

thor of all, to be without Knowledge and Understanding. And if there be Intelligence at all in the self-existent Being, it must be infinite Intelligence. And the Proofs of this are as plainly deducible from the Works which he hath made, as those of his almighty Power. For not only do we every where in this vast universal Frame, meet with manifest Evidences of an Understanding that filleth us with Admiration and Astonishment, but many of the Beings which he hath created are themselves endued with Knowledge and Understanding. And whence could intelligent Beings proceed but from an intelligent Cause? If the first Cause and Author of all had not Intelligence, it is not possible to conceive how there could ever be such a Thing as Intelligence in any derivative dependent Being. The Reasoning of the Psalmist is obvious, and invincibly strong and cogent. *He that teacheth Man Knowledge, shall not he know?* Psal. xciv. 10. We are conscious to ourselves that we are knowing Beings. We are as sure of this as we are of our Existence. The same we conclude concerning all other Men, in whom we see plain Marks of Knowledge and Understanding. Many of the human Race have attained to high Degrees of Science. And it cannot be denied,

nied, that the human Mind is capable of taking in a much larger Compass of Knowledge than any one Man here on Earth was ever possessed of. And all the Knowledge that ever was or can be found in any Man is but a Ray from the Father of Lights, the supreme Intelligence. And must not he who is the Author and Fountain of Reason and Understanding to all other Beings, who made us and all the Orders of intelligent Creatures throughout this vast Universe, many of them of amazing Capacities for Knowledge, and probably much superior to the most knowing among Men, have an inexhausted Fund of Knowledge in himself? and that free from all the Imperfections which attend it in us, or in any created Beings? His Knowledge is not acquired by a laborious Search and Deduction, inferring one Thing from another, but is intuitive and immediate, certain and infallible, incapable of Error or Mistake, and universal in its Extent. His Knowledge therefore must be Omniscience. He knoweth himself his own infinite Essence and Perfections, the whole Extent of his Power, and all the Councils and Purposes of his Will. And he knoweth the whole Compass of the Creation, this vast Universe, and all the Beings it containeth, of every Order and Degree, all their Essen-

ces

ces, Properties, Capacities, and Powers, all of which were made and contrived by him, with all the various Ways in which those Faculties and Powers will operate in any Circumstance of Things, and all the Relations and Respects they bear to one another and to the whole. And consequently he must needs know all Things; all Things possible, all Things actual, all Things future; yea even those Futurities that appear to be most contingent, and to depend on the free Determination of moral voluntary Agents. For to subtract from the divine Fore-knowledge the free Actions of the numberless moral Agents throughout the Universe, and consequently the Events which depend upon them, and the many Things that come to pass in the natural World through the Intervention of the voluntary Actions of free Agents, to suppose that these are not foreknown by him at all, or not with Certainty, would be to bring his Knowledge under great Limitations and Restraints. He might in that Case be mistaken in the Designs and Schemes he had formed, and be surpris'd with Events which he did not foresee, and might literally be subject to repent, which is unworthy of God, and scarce consistent with his infinite Perfection. Nor is our not
being

being able to account how God doth foreknow these Things, a just or sufficient Objection against it, since it is unreasonable to expect that we should be able to explain or to conceive all the Ways which an infinite Understanding hath of knowing Things. Even Men may in many Cases foresee how other Men, who are free Agents, will determine themselves. And if any wise Man had a perfect Knowledge of another Man's Temper, Humour, prevailing Appetites and Inclinations, of all his Interests and Connections, and of all attending Circumstances in any given Case, he might form a very probable Judgment, which would seldom fail, how that Man would act in such an Instance. And it is but reasonable to conclude, that God, to whom every particular Person, and all Things relating to him, are perfectly foreknown, is able to foresee, not only by probable Conjecture, but with absolute Certainty, how every particular Person will act and determine himself. And accordingly, God's Fore-knowledge of the free Actions of Men, and of the Events belonging to them, hath been generally believed and acknowledged in all Ages. It were easy to produce remarkable Testimonies to this Purpose from heathen Writers, and even from some of the most celebrated ancient

50 DISCOURSE II.

Philosophers. And it seems to be clearly asserted in the holy Scriptures. It is there represented as the proper Character of the Deity. Hence that Challenge to the heathen Idols, *Let them shew the former Things, (i. e. before they come to pass) that we may consider them, and know the latter End of them, or declare us Things for to come. Shew the Things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods.* Isa. xli. 22, 23. By the Things that are to come are plainly to be understood, not merely Things that depend upon necessary Causes, but upon the Will and Determination of free Agents, and the Revolutions of human Affairs. And it is plainly intimated, that it is the Prerogative of God to know such future Events, and of him only. And therefore he expressly attributeth this Knowledge to himself, after denying it to all others. *I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the End from the Beginning, and from ancient Times the Things that are not yet done, saying, My Counsel shall stand, and I will do all my Pleasure.* Isa. xlvi. 9, 10. And accordingly there are many clear and express Predictions recorded in Scripture concerning Events that appear to have depended as much as any Events whatsoever upon the free Actions of Men, and even their evil
 Actions,

DISCOURSE II. 51

Actions, to which they were in no wise necessitated, but did them freely. And not only this, but in every other Instance, the Perfection and vast Extent of the divine Knowledge is excellently represented and described in the sacred Writings. It is declared that *his Understanding is infinite*. Psal. cxlviii. 5. that *there is no searching of his Understanding*. Isa. xl. 28. that *known unto him are all his Works from the Beginning of the World*. Acts xv. 18. that *there is not any Creature that is not manifest in his Sight, but all Things are naked and opened unto the Eyes of him with whom we have to do*. Heb. iv. 13. Particularly it is there frequently observed that he knoweth all the Actions of Men, their Words, and even their Hearts and most secret Thoughts, which is a Consideration of the highest Moment in Religion, and than which nothing can have a greater Influence to engage us to exercise a constant Care over our inward Frame and our outward Practice. Remarkable to this Purpose is that noble Passage of the Psalmist, *Psal. cxxxix. 1—4. O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my Down-sitting and mine Up-rising, thou understandest my Thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my Path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my Ways. For there is not a*

Word in my Tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.

Fifthly, In a near Connection with his infinite Knowledge, is his Wisdom; and this also may be clearly seen and understood by the Things that are made. Wisdom, in the general Notion of it, properly consisteth in proposing the most excellent Ends, and pursuing them by the fittest Means. It comprehendeth large and extensive Views, a clear Discernment of the mutual Relations of Things, of Order, Beauty, and Harmony, and is that whereby every Thing is contrived and done in the best and properest Manner. Among Men there may be, and often is, Knowledge without Wisdom; but Knowledge, considered in the most perfect Degree, as it is in God, is really inseparable from Wisdom. As he must needs know in every Instance what is best and fittest, and can have no Appetite or Interest to divert him from it, so among all the possible Schemes of Things, he always chuseth and executeth that which is, all Things considered, the best and most worthy of himself, and becoming his own glorious Perfections, and most for the universal Good. His Wisdom is not acquired by Observation and Experience like ours, nor is it capable of gradual Improvement, but
is

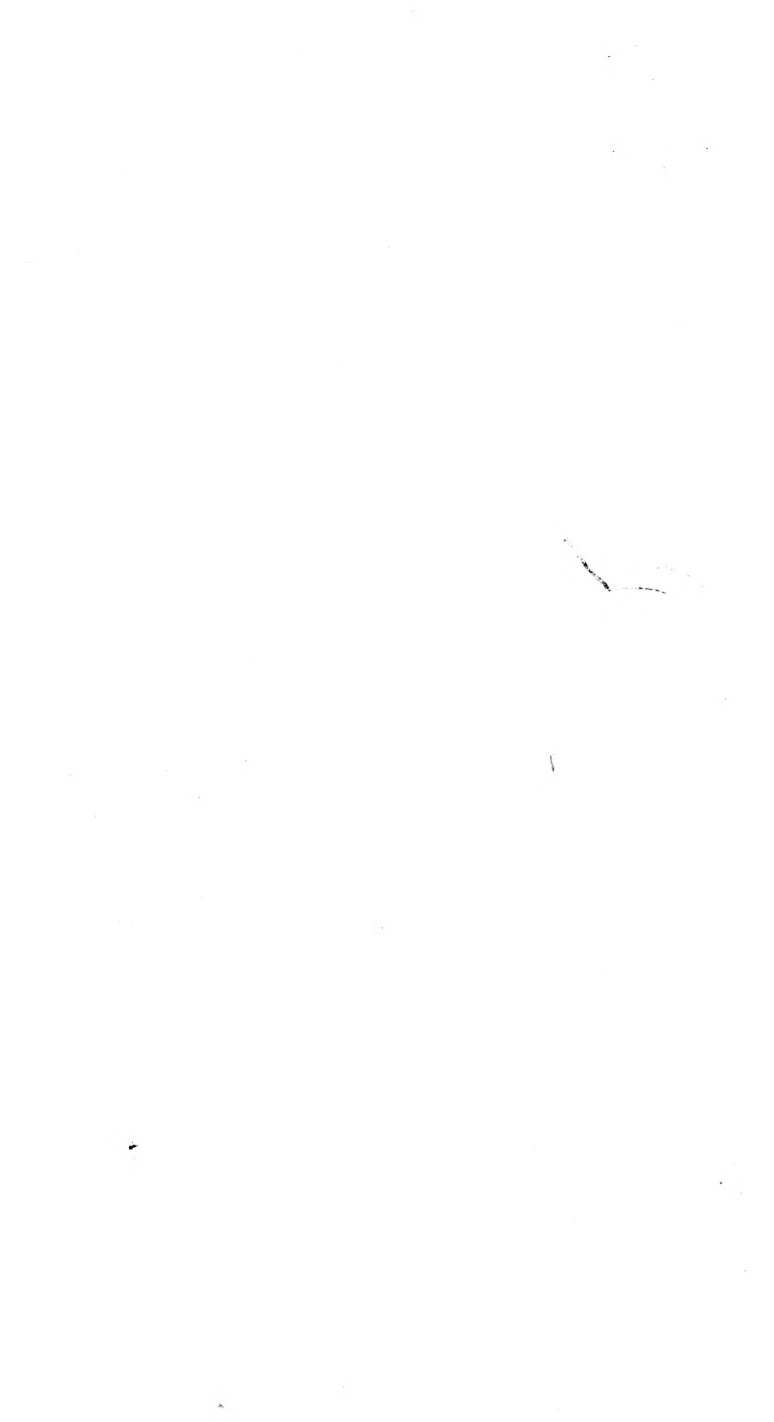
DISCOURSE II. 53

is essential to him, and absolutely perfect. It taketh in the whole Compass of Things, and extendeth to all Times and Ages, and therefore formeth its Designs upon the most comprehensive and unerring Views, and can never take wrong Measures. And the Evidences of this Wisdom are very conspicuous in his wonderful Works. Even the least, the most inconsiderable of them, the Formation of the smallest Insect, discover Skill and Contrivance far surpassing that of any Man, or of all the Men upon Earth. But if we had a distinct View of this capacious System, the Laws by which it is governed, the apt Disposition of its Parts, and their mutual Relations and Subserviencies, the Uniformity and Regularity of Design, which is carried on amidst the greatest Variety, from whence resulteth a wonderful Beauty and Harmony in the Constitution of Things; how should we be filled with Admiration of the manifold Wisdom of God! Many, for knowing a little of these Things (for it is but a small Part of them that we can now pretend to know after all our Enquiries) have been honoured with the glorious Name of Philosophers or Lovers of Wisdom, and been admired as Persons of an extensive Genius. And how unconceivable then must that Wisdom be which contrived and formed the whole

Frame of Nature, and hath disposed all Things in such excellent Order in Number, Weight, and Measure; surely the Author of all these Things must be as wise as he is powerful, *wonderful in Counsel, and excellent in Working*. Isa. xxviii. 29. What Reason have we to cry out with the Psalmist, *O Lord, how manifold are thy Works! In Wisdom hast thou made them all*. Psal. civ. 24. But the noblest Exercise and Display of his Wisdom is in the Formation of intellectual Beings, moral Agents, and in his governing them according to their Natures, without infringing their essential Freedom, still carrying on and accomplishing his own excellent Designs, bringing Good out of Evil, and Order out of Confusion, and ordering and over-ruling Things for the best upon the whole. And if in the Works of Creation, and in the Dispensations of Divine Providence, there are several Things, the Reasons and Ends of which we cannot at present account for, it is but just to attribute this to the Darkness and Narrowness of our Minds, which are not able to take in the entire Connection and Harmony of Things; whereas, he who seeth the whole at once, must, in every possible Circumstance, know what is properest and best.

DISCOURSE II. 55

So transcendently great is the Wisdom of God, that when compared with it, that of the most excellent of created Beings may be accounted Folly. Hence it is said that he chargeth his Angels with Folly, *Job* iv. 18. And he is represented in Scripture under the Character of the only wise God, as if none could be properly accounted wise and knowing but God only, and Glory is ascribed to him on that Account. *To God only wise, be Glory through Jesus Christ for ever.* Rom. xvi. 27. And again, *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be Honour and Glory, for ever and ever.* Amen. 1 Tim. i. 17. This his Wisdom layeth a solid Foundation for Trust and Confidence in him, and for committing ourselves and all our Ways to his Direction and Disposal. The Wisdom of God, taken in the most extensive View, comprehendeth all his moral Perfections under it, and directeth them in their Exercise. And these his moral Attributes are what I propose to consider in my next Discourse.



*The Being and Perfections of God
proved from his Works.*

DISCOURSE III.

ROMANS i. 20.

For the invisible Things of him 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.

HAVING considered the Existence of God as demonstrated from his wonderful Works, and also taken a summary View of some of those divine Perfections and Attributes which essentially belong to the great Creator and Governor of the World, particularly his Eternity and necessary Existence, from whence it follows
that

58 DISCOURSE III.

that he must be self-sufficient, independent, and unchangeable, his Immensity and Omnipresence, his almighty Power, his infinite Knowledge and Wisdom; let us now proceed briefly to consider those which are usually called his moral Attributes, and which are absolutely necessary to be believed and known by us, as without a Sense of them there can be no such Thing as Religion. And these also may be justly regarded as essentially included in that Godhead, and in those invisible Things of God, which the Apostle here tells us are understood by the Things which are made. They are those of the divine Attributes that we find it least difficult to apprehend, since we may trace the Resemblances of them in our own Natures, which may assist us to form some Notion of them, as they are in God in the highest possible Degree of Eminency. For it is a Principle of the clearest Evidence, that whatever Excellencies are to be found in any derivative dependent Being, are all summed up in the supreme universal Cause from whom they are derived, and that in an infinitely higher Degree of Perfection, and without those Limitations and Defects with which they are attended in the Creature.

And

DISCOURSE III. 59

And in considering the moral Attributes of God, one of the first that presenteth itself to our Minds, is his infinite Goodness. This seemeth to be naturally included in the Idea of an infinitely perfect Body. It may easily be supposed, that a finite Being, who is not self-sufficient, who may want, or think he wanteth, something to complete his Happiness which others are possessed of, may have narrower Views to his own private Interests or Appetites, and consequently may be malevolent, envious, and revengeful, which is the Reverse of true Goodness. But that the infinite and all-sufficient Being, who hath no Superior, no Equal or Competitor, and who is incapable of having the least Addition made to his own Perfection and Happiness; that he should be capable of Envy, Malice, narrow selfish Affections, or malignant Dispositions, is absolutely unconceivable. But though God's Goodness may, according to this Way of Reasoning, be plainly inferred from the infinite and absolute Perfection of his Nature, as that may be argued from his Eternity and independent necessary Existence; yet the most obvious and convincing Proof of his Goodness, is that which ariseth from the Discoveries of it that are every where observable in his wonderful Works. The
Creation

60 DISCOURSE III.

Creation of the World is a manifest Proof of his Goodness; since it is hard to conceive what could move the self-sufficient Jehovah to create this great System of the Universe, and so many different Orders of Beings in it, but the diffusive Benignity of his Nature, which causeth him to delight in communicating Happiness, and in distributing freely out of his boundless Fullness. The slightest Observation may convince us, that this Globe of ours, which is that Part of the Creation which we are best acquainted with, (and we may justly conclude the same concerning all the other Parts of this vast Universe) *is full of the Goodness of the Lord.* It is furnished with an ample Variety of Things, proper for the Use and Entertainment of the Creatures that live upon it, and especially of Mankind. God hath so constituted our Natures, as to make us capable of taking in Pleasures of several Kinds, sensitive, intellectual, and moral. These last are of a far higher and nobler Nature than the former, and have the greatest Influence on our Happiness. But even sensitive Enjoyments, if duly regulated, contribute not a little to the Satisfaction of human Life; as we are furnished with various sensitive Organs and Appetites, and capable of exciting in us the most agreeable Sensations.

And

DISCOURSE III. 61

And though we may reasonably suppose, that in the present degenerate State of Mankind, many Things are ordered for our Correction and Punishment, and as Marks of the divine Displeasure against us for our Sins; yet still it cannot be denied, that we are surrounded with a Profusion of Benefits. Abundant Provision is made, not only for our Necessity, but for our Delight. Every where may we behold the most illustrious Evidence of the Goodness and Benignity of the great Author of Nature. For how can he but be good, from whom descendeth every good and perfect Gift, and who communicateth Life and Happiness to numberless Orders of Beings, according to their various Natures and Capacities? Even among Men, degenerate as they now are, we may observe admirable Instances of extensive Charity and Benevolence, which carrieth them to delight in shewing Mercy, and in doing Good to all around them, as far as they have Ability and Opportunity. And those are justly esteemed the most valuable and lovely of the human Race, in whom these good and kind Affections most abound and prevail. And from these Distances of Goodness in Creatures like ourselves, we should ascend in our Thoughts to God, regarding them as imperfect Resemblances of his original uncreated

uncreated Goodness. We may reasonably conclude that this benevolent Disposition, which is so amiable and praise-worthy in the Creatures, is to be found in the highest Degree of Eminency in the great Parent of the Universe, who hath implanted those kind Affections in our Hearts, and hath given us a strong Sense of the Beauty and Loveliness of such a Temper and Conduct. The Goodness that is in the best of Men is imperfect, it is in Danger of being over-ruled or restrained by irregular selfish Appetites and Passions and private Interests. But God's Benevolence is boundless as his Being, extending its Influence to every Part of this wide Universe. To him (as was before hinted) are no irregular Appetites, no narrow selfish Affections or Interests to limit or over-rule the perfect Benignity of his Nature. If therefore we often behold with Admiration the lovely Traces of Benevolence, which may be observed in human Characters, though attended with manifold Defects, how amiable and admirable is the great, unlimited, underived Source of Goodness and Happiness? This Goodness of God may be considered in various Views according to the various Ways in which it is exercised. It comprehendeth his free and diffusive Benignity towards all his
Creatures,

DISCOURSE III. 63

Creatures, his Mercy towards the miserable, his Patience and Long-suffering towards the guilty, in deferring and moderating the Punishment they had incurred, and his Disposition to pardon those of them that are proper Objects of Forgiveness, and as far as is consistent with the great Ends of his Government. For it must be considered that his Goodness, as to its Exercise, is always under the Direction of infinite Wisdom, and is exercised towards Particulars in a regular Subserviency to the universal Good, which is what the supreme Goodness as well as Wisdom, will always have principally in View. And there is none of the divine Attributes more frequently celebrated in the sacred Writings than his Goodness. It is there declared, that *the Lord is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all his Works.* Psal. cxlv. 9. that he is full of Compassion, *and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth.* Exod. xxxiv. 6. and that *he delighteth in Mercy.* Micah. vii. 18. We are called upon to *give Thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his Mercy endureth for ever.* Psal. cxxxvi. 1. He is described to lie under that amiable Character, that *God is Love.* 1 John iv. 8. Not only kind and loving, but infinite Love and Goodness itself. His Goodness is represented

64 DISCOURSE III.

presented to us in the Scripture as appearing in the Benefits of a common boundless Providence, in that he causeth his Sun to shine and his Rain to descend, and doeth Good even to the unthankful and the evil, filling Mens Hearts with Food and Gladness. But especially, the most marvellous Scene of divine Love and Grace is there opened to us as shining forth in all its Riches and Glory in the Methods of our Redemption through his well-beloved Son *Jesus Christ* our Lord. Him God hath sent into the World *to seek and to save that which was lost*, to instruct us by his Doctrine, to guide us by his Example, and to make Atonement for our Sins by his Sufferings and Death: And through him he hath condescended to enter into a gracious Covenant with us, in which he hath promised to pardon all our Iniquities upon our returning to him by a humble Faith and sincere Repentance, to grant us the Assistances of his Holy Spirit, and to admit us to all the Privileges of his Children, and to crown our sincere, though imperfect Obedience, with a glorious Resurrection and eternal Life in his immediate blissful Presence and Kingdom above. There he will bestow on us a Happiness far transcending all that we are able to express, or even to conceive.

With

DISCOURSE III. 65

With regard to the other moral Attributes of God, his impartial Justice and Righteousness, his steady and invariable Faithfulness and Truth, and, that which comprehendeth all the rest under it, his Holiness, these are also included in the Idea of the absolutely perfect Being, the great Author and Parent of the Universe. To him it is originally owing, that there is an inward Sense of the Worth and Excellency of these Things deeply fixed in the human Heart. As far as we act under the Influence of such Dispositions, we feel an inward Complacency, and have the peaceful Testimony and Approbation of our own Minds, as acting up to the true Dignity of the reasonable Nature. And on the other Hand, we have a deep Conviction of the Baseness, the Evil, and Deformity, of a contrary Temper and Conduct. When we are conscious of it in ourselves, it layeth the Foundation of inward Satisfaction and Remorse; and we can scarce help disapproving it wherever we observe it in others. We naturally esteem a Man of generous Probity, one that *walketh uprightly, and worketh Righteousness, and speaketh the Truth in his Heart*, and who will not upon any Consideration be prevailed with to do a base, a false and unjust Thing. But especially we are apt

66 DISCOURSE III.

to have a high Esteem and Admiration for a virtuous and just Prince or Magistrate, that hath a steady uniform Regard to impartial Righteousness and Equity in all his Administrations, and who sheweth a noble Detestation of all Injustice and Falshood, Vice and Wickedness. And, on the other Hand, if we observe a Man that hath no Regard to Truth and Honour, that is false and unjust, vicious and impure, such a Character naturally begetteth in us Abhorrence or Contempt; and the more exalted such a Person is in his Station or Power, the more the Odioufness, the Malignity and Deformity of his Character and Conduct, and the evil and pernicious Influence of it appeareth.

Now can it be thought that the great Author of our Beings would have implanted such a Sense of the Beauty and Excellency of Justice, Truth, and Righteousness, in our Nature, and which can scarce ever be utterly erased, if he himself were not holy, just, and righteous? Or would he have implanted in us such a strong and indelible Sense of the Evil and Deformity of Vice, Injustice, and Falshood, whereby we are almost invariably carried in our calm Thoughts to disapprove and condemn it in ourselves and others, if he himself had not a fixed Aversion to that which

DISCOURSE III. 67

is unjust, false, and unrighteous? If the greater Degree there is of real Worth and Excellency in any Man, the greater Love and Regard he hath to that which is just, and true, and pure, and virtuous, and praise-worthy, and the greater Abhorrence of the contrary; then certainly God, the supreme Cause, from whom is derived whatsoever is excellent in Men, or any created Beings, must have an infinitely greater Love to Righteousness, Truth, Purity, and Virtue, and an infinitely greater Detestation of all moral Evil. As his Understanding and Wisdom is infinite, so he cannot but have a most just and perfect Discernment of the moral Differences of Things, and of whatsoever is agreeable or disagreeable to the eternal Rules of Order. He at once seeth and knoweth in every Instance what is fit for him to do, and what is proper to be done by his Creatures in all their various Relations towards him, and towards one another. He can never possibly mistake the amiable and praise-worthy, for the irregular, foul, and odious, or put Wrong for Right, or Right for Wrong, Falshood for Truth, or Truth for Falshood. And agreeable to the pure and perfect Light of his Mind, is the Rectitude of his Will, whereby he is eternally and invariably determined to will

68 DISCOURSE III.

and to do that which appeareth to his unerring Understanding to be good and right, and hath a steady Averſion to whatſoever is unjuſt, foul, and diſorderly, repugnant to the Reaſon of Things, and to the pure and bright Ideas of his infinite Mind. He can have nothing to turn him aſide from an inviolable Regard to the ſacred Rules of Juſtice and Equity, no falſe Judgment to miſlead him, no irregular Appetites and Paſſions to corrupt and pervert him, no private Interests to bribe him, nothing to hope or to fear from the Favour or Diſpleaſure of any Being whatſoever.

This moral Excellency of the divine Nature as comprehending his Purity and Holineſs, his Righteouſneſs and Juſtice, his Faithfulneſs and Truth, is often inſiſted upon in the ſacred Writings, as being very neceſſary to be known and conſidered by us. It is there declared that God is *the Rock, his Work is perfect, and all his Ways are Judgment; a God of Truth, and without Iniquity; juſt and right is he.* Deut. xxxii. 4. that *the Lord is upright, and there is no Unrighteouſneſs in him.* Pſal. xcii. 15. that *the Truth of the Lord endureth for ever; and that it is impoſſible for God to lie.* Pſal. cxvii. 2. Heb. vi. 18. that he is of *purer Eyes than to behold Evil, and cannot*

DISCOURSE III. 69

cannot look at Iniquity: i. e. cannot look upon it without Detestation and Abhorrence. *Habbak. i. 13.* The heavenly Hosts are represented as celebrating him under this Character, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. Isa. vi. 3.* And this is the Subject of that noble and triumphant Song, *Rev. xv. 3, 4. Great and marvellous are thy Works, Lord God almighty; just and true are thy Ways, O thou King of Saints. Who would not fear thee, and glorify thy Name? For thou only art holy.* He alone is originally, eternally, and unchangeably holy. The Holiness and Righteousness of God shineth forth to us in the Precepts of his written Law, which are holy, just, and good, and is brightly exemplified in the Life and Character of *Jesus Christ*, his well-beloved Son, the living Image of the invisible Deity here below, who was full of Grace and Truth, perfectly holy, harmless, undefiled, and who *did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth* By looking to him, and observing his Temper and Conduct, we may behold the most lovely Representation of the Holiness, and Truth, and Purity, as well as of the Goodness and Mercy of God. So that under the Gospel we have peculiar Advantages for knowing and contemplating the amiable moral Excellencies of the Deity, which are now

70 DISCOURSE III.

displayed to us in the most convincing and affecting Light.

It must be acknowledged indeed, that there are some Things in the present Course of the divine Dispensations, which we find hard to reconcile to our Notions of the perfect Righteousness and Equity of the Supreme Being. God's Judgments are represented in some Instances as *unsearchable, and his Ways past finding out.* But still we are assured, that though *Clouds and Darkness are round about him, yet Righteousness and Judgment are the Habitation, or Establishment, of his Throne.* Psal. xcvi. 2. *Righteous is the Lord in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works.* Psal. cxlv. 17. And so undoubtedly it shall appear at the great Day of final Retributions, and the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God, when the whole wonderful Scheme of the divine Administrations towards Mankind shall be brought into a clear and open View, of which we now have very imperfect Apprehensions, and shall all appear to have been most wisely and justly ordered.

Thus have I endeavoured to set before you in a short and plain View the principal Attributes and Perfections which Reason as well as Scripture teacheth us to ascribe unto God. As it appeareth by the clearest

DISCOURSE III. 71

clearest and most convincing Evidence, that there must be a supreme Cause and Author of the Universe, so also that he must be possessed of infinite Perfection; that he must have existed necessarily from everlasting, and shall exist to everlasting, and is self-sufficient, independent, and unchangeable; that he is every where present without any Bounds or Limits of his Essence; that he is of almighty Power, of unfearchable Wisdom and Knowledge, of the most extensive Goodness and Benignity, of perfect Holiness, Righteousness, and Truth. All this is included in that great and fundamental Article of all Religion, that God is. And the Importance and Necessity of believing this, is evident to every considering Mind. *Without Faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Heb. xi. 6. This plainly lieth at the Foundation of all that religious Worship and Obedience which good Men in all Ages have rendered to the Supreme Being; and when duly impressed upon the Mind, and frequently considered, can scarce fail to have an advantageous Influence upon the whole Temper and Practice. And all the Wickedness and Disorders among Mankind are owing to the

72 DISCOURSE III.

Want of a hearty Belief and Sense of a present Deity. *The Fool hath said in his Heart, There is no God.* And then it immediately follows, *They are corrupt, they have done abominable Works, &c.* Psal. xiv. 1, 2. *The Transgression of the Wicked saith within my Heart, that there is no Fear of God before his Eyes: i. e.* His Transgression convinceth me of it, because otherwise he would not dare so freely and boldly to go on in his sinful Courses. *Psal. xxxvi. 1.* There are few indeed, if any, that will openly profess to disbelieve a Deity. But many there are who have not a real thorough Persuasion of this Principle fixed in their Hearts, or do not consider it, and pursue it to its just Consequences. If they profess to believe a God, they in effect banish him from their Minds. *God is not in all their Thoughts,* as the Psalmist speaks, *Psal. x. 4.* He is to them as if he were not. And what a strange Depravity of Heart doth this argue! How inexcusable must it be to live in an habitual Forgetfulness of God, when we cannot look abroad into the World about us, nor look inwardly into our own Frame, but the illustrious Evidences of a Deity offer themselves to our View! Let us carefully guard against such a Temper and Conduct; and not only labour to get our Minds wrought

DISCOURSE III. 73

wrought to a full and strong Persuasion of the Existence of God, but frequently realize him to our Minds in his incomparable Excellencies and Perfections, and endeavour to get those Affections and Dispositions in Exercise, which the firm Belief and frequent Consideration of the Existence and Perfections of God hath a manifest Tendency to excite and strengthen in our Souls.

More particularly, first, we should love him with all our Hearts, who is the best of Beings, the Fountain of all Perfection, who hath every Thing that is excellent, amiable, and glorious, united in himself in the highest possible Degree, and without the least Defect, and who is continually doing Good, and is ever ready to communicate of his Fulness. Especially when we consider the numberless Benefits he hath poured forth upon the human Race in their present degenerate State, and the astonishing Displays of his rich Grace and Mercy in the Methods of our Redemption and Salvation by *Jesus Christ*; should not all this engage us to love him above all? And where this is the prevailing Disposition, it will purify our Souls from every base vile Affection; it will cause us to delight ourselves in him, and to make it our earnest and continual Care
and

74 DISCOURSE III.

and Endeavour to please and serve him, and to do those Things which he will accept and approve.

Secondly, We ought also to fear him with the profoundest Reverence, and dread his Displeasure above all Things. Who is there that is to be feared by us in Comparison of that most glorious Being, whose almighty Power no Creature can resist, whose incomparable Justice can never be bribed and perverted, whose spotless Purity and Holiness causeth him to hate Sin with a perfect Hatred, from whose Presence no Man can flee, and on whom we absolutely and every Moment depend? And the natural Effect of this religious Fear of God, joined with a superlative Love towards him, should be to engage us to yield an absolute unreserved Subjection to his Authority and Laws, and an entire Resignation to his Will in all Things.

Thirdly, A hearty Belief in God, and in his incomparable Perfections, should also lay a Foundation for a steady Trust and Confidence in him. With what a firm Reliance, even under the most discouraging Difficulties, should we commit ourselves to him in well-doing, who hath an infinite Power to protect and defend us, Wisdom to direct and guide us, Goodness to pity and provide for us, and who is
every

DISCOURSE III. 75

every Way qualified to be an all-sufficient Portion for us, to make us completely and eternally happy ?

This leads me to add, fourthly, that we must worship him in Spirit and in Truth with a pure Adoration. To him we should, from sincere and devout Minds, render that religious Homage which is justly due from reasonable Creatures to the Supreme Being, their great Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor. *O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.* Psal. xcv. 6. To him, in Testimony of our continual Dependence, we ought to offer up our humble Prayers and Supplications for all the good Things we stand in need of, and our grateful Acknowledgments and Thanksgivings for all the Mercies we enjoy; and we must, as far as in us lieth, celebrate his transcendent Excellencies and Perfections, in solemn Acts of Praise, which is one of the noblest Exercises in which we can be engaged.

Finally, we should be earnestly desirous to honour him in the World in the general Course of our Practice, doing every Thing we do in a Subordination to his Glory, and setting this before us, as our supreme governing End. And we should aspire to resemble him as far as he is imitable by such Creatures as we are, in his admirable
moral

76 DISCOURSE III.

moral Excellencies, his Wisdom, Goodness, Holiness, Justice, and Truth. To resemble him in these is the highest Glory and Felicity of our Nature, and the greater Advances we make in such a Conformity to the Deity, the more will he delight in us, and the more meet shall we be rendered for that blessed State, where we hope so to behold his Face in Righteousness, as to be perfectly satisfied with his Likeness.



On the Eternity of God.

DISCOURSE IV.

PSALM XC. 2.

*Before the Mountains were brought forth, or
ever thou hadst formed the Earth, or the
World, even from everlasting to everlast-
ing thou art God.*

IT is of high Importance to us, to endeavour to get our Minds habitually filled and possessed with just and exalted Sentiments of the Supreme Being. For these have a natural Tendency to produce in us devout Affections and Dispositions towards him, and thereby lay a Foundation for a holy and virtuous Practice. Some of the divine Attributes, especially his amiable
moral

78 DISCOURSE IV.

moral Excellencies, are of such a Nature, that they are proposed to us as the Objects of our Imitation; and to aspire to a Conformity to him in them, as far as we are capable of attaining to it, is our Privilege and Glory as well as Duty. But there are others of the divine Attributes with regard to which he is not so properly to be imitated as adored. Such is the Eternity of God, which, if rightly considered, tendeth to fill our Minds with the profoundest Veneration of the Deity, and is capable of being improved to the most excellent Purposes of Religion. This is what I propose now to consider. And a humble Modesty becometh us when treating on this glorious Subject, lest we *darken Counsel by Words without Knowledge*. If we set ourselves seriously to contemplate it, our Thoughts are soon swallowed up in a vast and unsearchable Abyss. Something however we may usefully offer concerning it, following the Light which the Scripture affordeth us, and which is perfectly agreeable to the soundest Reason.

By the Eternity of God we are to understand the Duration of the divine Existence; and as his Being is infinite and boundless, so is the Duration of it infinite too. There are various Ways of Expression made use of in Scripture to help us in

DISCOURSE IV. 79

our Conceptions concerning it. Though after all, the sublimest Conceptions we can form, and the noblest Expressions that Language can afford, must needs fall vastly short, and must terminate in a profound and awful Admiration.

There is scarce any Passage in the sacred Writings in which the Eternity of God is described in a sublimer Manner than in that which I have chosen for the Subject of this Discourse. *Moses*, as appeareth from the Title, was the Penman of this Psalm. And he begins his Meditations on the Shortness and Uncertainty of human Life, which is what he principally insisteth upon, with the Contemplation of God's Eternity, which he thus admirably describeth. *Before the Mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the Earth, or the World, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.* We are wont to divide Eternity in our Thoughts into that which is past, and which was without Beginning, and that which is to come, and which shall never have an End. Neither the one nor the other of these is to be fully comprehended by any finite Understanding. But in whichever of these Views we consider it, whether we look back to the eternal Duration which passed before we ourselves, or the World had an Existence,

80 DISCOURSE IV.

Existence, or look forward to the vast unlimited Duration which is yet to come; God equally filleth and possesseth it all. *From everlasting to everlasting thou art God.*

It is to signify God's Eternity that he is introduced as declaring concerning himself; *Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.* Isa. xliii. 10. And again, *I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God.* Isa. xliv. 6. He is the first original Cause of all; from him all other Beings derive their Existence, and on him they absolutely depend; and therefore he alone is properly and essentially God.

Another Manner of Expression which is made use of in Scripture in Condescension to our Capacities, to describe God's Eternity, is, that he is represented under the Character of him *which is, and which was, and which is to come.* Rev. i. 8. iv. 8. All Duration, according to our Manner of conceiving it, is reducible to these Three, the past, the present, and the future, or that which was, that which now is, and that which shall be. And God equally comprehendeth all these, without Variation or Change, in his own infinite and boundless Duration. Justly therefore is he called the *everlasting God, the King eternal,*
the

DISCOURSE IV. 81

the living God; i. e. he that *liveth for ever and ever*. Rev. iv. 9. This is what he asserteth concerning himself with great Solemnity, as it were calling his own Deity to witness, *I lift up my Hand to Heaven, and say, I live for ever*. Deut. xxxii. 40.

The Eternity of God is one Thing especially intended in that mysterious Character, *I am that I am*. It denoteth his permanent, stable, immutable Existence, that he always necessarily is, and hath an absolute Fulness of Being eternally and independently in himself. The same Thing, by the Acknowledgment of the most learned Critics, is signified by the Name *Jehovah*, by which he is so frequently described in Scripture, and which might properly enough be rendered, ‘the eternal’, as it is in some Versions.

Upon considering and comparing the several Representations made to us in Scripture of the Eternity of God; we may observe the following Things concerning it.

First, It signifies, that he never had a Beginning of his Being or Existence. This is necessarily included in the Notion of a proper Eternity. It is a Duration without Beginning; and such most certainly is the Duration of the blessed God. This is what the Psalmist here intendeth by say-

ing, *from everlasting—thou art God.* He existed from all Eternity by the glorious Necessity of his own most perfect Nature, which is such, that it was absolutely impossible for him ever not to have been, and consequently it was impossible for him ever to begin to be. This is the peculiar noble Prerogative of the supreme self-existent Jehovah. There was a Time when this whole wonderful System of created Things began to be: But from everlasting, from the Beginning, ere ever the Earth was, when as yet there was no Creature formed, the eternal God did exist, infinitely happy in himself, and in the Fulness of his own Perfection. The Space of Time which hath run out since the Creation may appear a long Time to us, and so it really is, if we compare it with the short Duration of human Life, or consider the great Variety of Events which have happened in it. How many successive Generations of Men have, in that Time, acted their Parts on this various and ample Theatre! And yet, what is the Duration of the whole Frame of Heaven and Earth compared with that of the infinite God? If we look back to the Beginning of the World, we may compute by Days and Years; but if we look into the immense Duration before it, Days and
Years

DISCOURSE IV. 83

Years are lost, and we have no Measure to adjust it by. Let us suppose ourselves removed to the Distance of infinite Ages before the World was formed, when we have carried our Thoughts as far back as the Power of Numbers can go, we shall still be no nearer a Beginning of the divine Existence than we were at first. In this amazing Contemplation we soon lose ourselves, and are overwhelmed with Astonishment.

Secondly, When God is said to be eternal, as it signifieth that he never had a Beginning, so also that he shall never have an End. This is no less necessarily included in the Notion of Eternity than the former, and it doth no less certainly and evidently belong to the Supreme Being. Hence, in the Language of the Psalmist, he is not only *from everlasting*, but *to everlasting*, God. Reason assureth us, that that which had no Beginning cannot possibly have an End. For that which is without Beginning, oweth not its Existence to the Efficiency of any external Cause, but hath the Reason of its Existence within itself, in the incomprehensible Perfection of its own Nature; and that which thus necessarily existeth, by the same Necessity must exist always. Whatsoever hath an End of its Being, it must

84 DISCOURSE IV.

either be owing to an inward Weakness and Imperfection in itself, or to the Violence of some external Cause; neither of which can, without the highest Absurdity, be supposed of the absolutely perfect, the independent, the omnipotent *Jehovah*. The vast Fabrick of this visible material System, however stable it appeareth to be, may be dissolved and fall to Ruin, but God can never fail or decay. This is elegantly and nobly expressed by the Psalmist, *Pfal. cii. 25, 26, 27. Of old hast thou laid the Foundations of the Earth, and the Heavens are the Work of thine Hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea all of them shall wax old like a Garment; as a Vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy Years shall have no End.* Hence God is called *immortal*. He is *the King eternal, immortal, invisible.* 1 Tim. i. 17. Yea it is said, that he *only hath Immortality.* 1 Tim. vi. 16. *i. e.* He only hath it originally and absolutely in himself, all others have it of and from him. Angels, and the Souls of Men, are immortal; but then this is only by his Donation and Grant, not by a Necessity of Nature; 'tis because it is the Will and Appointment of God that they should be so, who continually upholdeth them in Being, and is a Fountain

DISCOURSE IV. 85

tain of Life to them, and could, if he so pleased, soon put an End to their Existence. But God is essential, self-originate Life; he hath Life necessarily and independently in himself, and therefore it is in the Nature of the Thing absolutely impossible that he should ever cease to be. The Eternity of God, considered in this View, is no less astonishing and incomprehensible than in the former. Let us carry our Views forward, and compute Millions of Millions of Ages, till our Minds are wearied with the Computation, and then let us begin again where we left off, and add Millions of Millions more, and continue thus adding for ever, we shall never be able to measure out that Eternity which is to come, no more than we are able to measure that Eternity which is past; we shall be as far from reaching to the End of the one, as from arriving at the Beginning of the other.

Thirdly, Another thing to be observed with respect to God's Eternity, is, that there is no proper Succession in his Being or Duration, as there is in ours. We are successive, because we are but temporary Beings; our Duration is computed by Moments, Days, and Years; but his Duration is like himself, stable and permanent. God existeth in a different Manner from us, in a

86 DISCOURSE IV.

Manner which we are not able distinctly to conceive; and to which the Measures of our temporary transient Duration cannot be properly applied: We exist by Parcels, and in successive Moments; we partly existed Yesterday, partly do exist To-day, and partly shall exist To-morrow. But he ever filleth the whole boundless Duration, and is completely adequate to it; hence he is said to *inhabit Eternity*, If. lvii. 15. And indeed, it is he that by existing always constitutes Eternity; which, properly speaking, is nothing else but the Duration of his infinite Being. He equally enjoyeth it all, and hath the full entire Possession of a most perfect and endless Life. He was never younger, and never shall be older than he always is; it cannot be said that he is older now, than he was before the Creation of the World, notwithstanding the many Ages which have passed since: For these Terms of older and younger, may be applied to Creatures that are in a continual Succession, but not to that most stable and unchangeable Being. He is indeed in Scripture called the Antient of Days, and Years are sometimes ascribed to him; but we are not to take these Things strictly and literally. This manner of Expression is sometimes made use of in a Way of Accommodation to our Weakness, because we can really form no
Conception

DISCOURSE IV. 87

Conception of any Duration, but what is to be computed by Days and Years like our own; but it is most proper to say of God in all the various Points of Duration, He is. This is signified by that most venerable Character which he appropriateth to himself, and which hath been already mentioned, *I am that I am*; or, as the Septuagint renders it, ‘I am he that is.’ And in the Words of the Text, it is not merely said, Thou wast God from everlasting, and thou shalt be God to everlasting, but *from everlasting to everlasting thou art God*. Such a manner of speaking would seem very harsh and absurd if applied to any finite successive Being, but is very proper when applied to the stable, unsuccessive Duration of the eternal God.

I should now come to what I principally intended in the Choice of this Subject, and that is, to make some useful Reflections upon it. I cannot insist particularly at present upon them, but shall content myself with this general Observation: That we may hence see how unable we are to comprehend God; and what Modesty and Humility becometh us in all our Researches and Enquiries into his adorable Nature, and into his divine Counsels. I know nothing more proper to humble the Pride of human Reason, and give a Check to that

88 DISCOURSE IV.

Presumption which pretendeth to grasp Infinity itself, than seriously to contemplate the Eternity of God. Nothing is more certain, and yet nothing is more incomprehensible, than the divine Eternity. It is undeniably evident that something must have been from Eternity; this is as evident as that any thing now is. The Atheist himself is forced to acknowledge this, whether he will or no; and being unwilling to own a most wise, and intelligent, and infinitely perfect Cause of all things, most absurdly ascribeth Eternity and Self-existence to dull, senseless, unactive Matter. But Eternity, though it is what we must of Necessity acknowledge, is what we are absolutely unable to conceive. How should Creatures that live by Parcels, and in a continual Succession, form a just Idea of an infinite, unsuccessive Duration? We can conceive of it no otherwise than as a Series of Days and Years following one another; and yet there is no proper Succession of Days and Years in the divine Eternity. For Years and Days, or any Number of them that can be supposed, is finite, and therefore cannot bear any Proportion to that which is infinite, as Eternity evidently is. If we endeavour to turn our Thoughts to the vast Duration before we ourselves had a Being, we shall find that
an

DISCOURSE IV. 89

an Eternity or infinite Duration is past already, according to our Manner; for if it were only a finite Duration that is past, it would be possible to come to the Beginning of it, and consequently to come to the Beginning of Eternity, which is a manifest Contradiction; and yet to say that an Eternity or infinite Duration is already past, is in effect to suppose Bounds to that which hath no Bounds, and so the Supposition destroys itself. I mention these Things, to shew how incapable such Creatures as we are, temporary, precarious, contingent Beings, who are but just started up into Existence, are to form a just and adequate Idea of that infinite and eternal Jehovah, who from everlasting to everlasting existeth necessarily of himself, by the peculiar Prerogative of his own most perfect Nature. It appeareth by this, and other Instances which might be mentioned, that natural Religion as it is usually called, hath its Mysteries, as well as revealed. None of those that are accounted the Mysteries of the Christian Religion, (if we consider them as they are taught in the sacred Writings), are attended with greater Difficulties, than this of God's Eternity. Let us turn our Thoughts never so many ways, we shall not find it possible for us to form any Notion of it, but what involveth in it
seeming

seeming Inconsistencies, and is liable to Difficulties which we are not able to account for: And yet the Man that should pretend to deny the Eternity of God, because he cannot distinctly conceive or explain it, would only render himself ridiculous. Let this therefore teach us to think and speak of the great God, with the profoundest Humility and Reverence. On such Occasions we should call to mind that Question of Zophar, *Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto Perfection?* Job xi. 7. Shall we pretend to deny every Thing concerning him, which we are not able clearly to comprehend, and thus presume to reduce the infinite Jehovah to the Model of our scanty Intellect? Shall we take upon us to censure the Counsels of the Eternal, we who are but of Yesterday, and know Nothing? That Question of the Almighty to Job, should silence each vain presumptuous Mortal: *Where wast thou when I laid the Foundation of the Earth? Declare if thou hast Understanding.* Job xxxviii. 4. Surely then it becometh us all to fall down before the Eternal with the deepest Prostration of Soul. All God's Perfections are as himself, eternal. This spreadeth Infinity through his whole Nature and Attributes: Under this Character of eternal he is particularly entitled

DISCOURSE IV. 91

entitled to the Adorations and Praises of all in Heaven and Earth. The whole heavenly Host are represented as giving Glory, and Honour, and Thanks to him that liveth for ever and ever; and as saying, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.* Rev. iv. 8. Let us join in the same humble and devout Adorations, and make the Apostle's Doxology ours. *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be Honour and Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

On the Eternity of God.

DISCOURSE V.

P S A L. XC. 2.

*Before the Mountains were brought forth, or
ever thou hadst formed the Earth, or the
World, even from everlasting to everlasting
thou art God.*

THE Eternity of God furnisheth a noble Subject for our Thoughts; and to assist you in your Meditations upon it, I endeavoured in a former Discourse to consider the Representations that are made to us of the divine Eternity in these remarkable Words of the Psalmist, and in several other Passages of Holy Writ. It was shewn, that the Eternity of God signifieth, 1st, That he never had a Beginning of his Being or Existence: 2dly, That it is impossible

impossible he ever should have an End: 3dly, That he is always the same, and that there is no proper Succession in his Being or Duration as there is in ours: And we concluded with this general Observation; That we may hence see, how unable we are to comprehend God, and what Humility and Modesty becometh us in all our Researches and Enquiries into his infinite Nature, and into his divine Counsels.

I now proceed to make some farther Reflections on this important Subject.

And first, The Consideration of God's Eternity should excite in us the most admiring Thoughts of his unequalled Majesty and Glory, and should affect our Hearts with the deepest Sense of the infinite Distance there is between him and the most glorious and exalted of all created Beings. In all things that come under our Notice, we may observe convincing Proofs of their having had a Beginning of their Existence. With regard to ourselves, we are conscious that it is but a few Years since we came into Being. The same must be said of the whole Race of Mankind, which, it is demonstrable, could not have been from everlasting upon this Earth. And there are many Things which plainly shew, that they are comparatively but of a late Original. The Earth itself, the Sea, the Air, and all Things that
that

DISCOURSE V. 95

that are therein, bear upon them the Characters of Mutability and Imperfection, which make it evident that they did not exist of themselves from everlasting. And the same may be justly concluded concerning those glorious Bodies, which perform their Courses and Revolutions in the vast Spaces around us: But when we rise beyond these Things to the great Author of the Universe; as we must acknowledge that he had an Existence before any Part of this visible World (which is his Contrivance and Workmanship) was formed; so we are naturally led to conclude, that he never had any Beginning of his Being. Let us pursue our Thoughts never so far through the Series of subordinate Causes, we must unavoidably come at length to something which was itself uncaused, and must therefore have been self-existent, or have existed necessarily from everlasting. And whatsoever is thus self-existent, must be independent and self-sufficient; as it was not beholden to any other for its Being or Perfection, so there is no other on whom it can be supposed in any Case to depend. It subsisteth wholly and only of itself, and standeth not in need of any foreign Assistance or Support; and for the same Reason that it is self-sufficient and independent, it is unchangeable too. That
which

which existeth necessarily from everlasting, cannot reasonably be supposed to be liable to Alteration or Change, since it can neither be supposed to have any Weakness or Principle of Change in itself, nor to be obnoxious to the Power of any external Cause; it must also be possessed of infinite Perfection, without any Limitation or Defect. Derivative dependent Beings must be limited in one Respect or another; and the Reason is plain, because they owe their Existence and their Perfections, their Nature and Properties, to the Power and Will of a superior Cause. But that Being which existeth necessarily of itself cannot be limited; for it hath nothing to restrain or limit it from without, since there is no superior Cause, on whom it dependeth; nor hath it any Restriction or Limitation arising from within, since its existing necessarily could be only owing to the peculiar and transcendent Excellency of its own Nature; which is such, that it hath an absolute Fulness of Being and Perfection independently in itself. For no imaginable Reason can be given why the self-originate, necessarily existent Being, which hath nothing to set Bounds to it, should have some Perfections, and not all.

And now it appeareth what an eminent and glorious Prerogative, this of eternal
and

and necessary Existence is; and that there must needs be an infinite and unconceivable Distance between a Being to which this Privilege belongeth, and a Being which hath nothing of itself, but deriveth all that it is and hath from the Will and Power of another. We should therefore in the inward Estimation of our Minds, put an immense Difference between the eternal and necessarily existent Jehovah, and all created Beings whatsoever; acknowledging his unequalled Majesty, that he is, and that there is none other besides him. He is the $\tau\omicron\ \acute{\omicron}\nu$, as one of the most eminent of the ancient Philosophers called him, the Being, by way of Eminency; or *that which is, or existeth*, viz. necessarily and of himself; whereas other Things have only a precarious contingent Existence, and therefore in comparison of God can hardly be said to be at all. What the Prophet saith concerning all the Nations of the Earth, may be said concerning all the Orders of created Beings; that in the Sight of God and as compared with him, *they are as Nothing, yea even less than Nothing, and Vanity*, Isa. xl. 17. How justly therefore is he the Object of our profoundest Reverence! How should we sink into the very Dust before him, with the most awful and prostrate Adoration! God's Eternity and Self-ex-

[VOL. I.] H istence

98 DISCOURSE V.

istence lieth at the Foundation of all his other Attributes, and giveth them infinite Force. Hence the Apostle speaketh of *his eternal Power and Godhead*. Rom. i. 20. His Power, his Wisdom, his Goodness, all his Perfections, in a Word his Godhead is eternal: And on this account we should pay him our religious Homage with the humblest Devotion.

This leads me to another Observation which naturally ariseth upon this Subject; and that is, How amazing is the Condescension of this eternal God in taking favourable Notice of such Creatures as we are! It is evident that he cannot stand in need of us, or of our Services. He existed from everlasting before any Part of this vast Frame of Nature was made, or any of the Beings contained in it. Throughout that infinite Duration, when as yet neither Angels nor Men had a Being, he was perfectly happy in the Enjoyment of himself. It was not therefore from any Indigence in himself that he formed any of his Creatures; for he could have continued happy to Eternity without them, as well as he was infinitely happy before they existed. Wherein can such temporary finite Beings be profitable to the eternal, self-sufficient Jehovah? What Advantage can he reap from their Praises and Services? Should
not

DISCOURSE V. 99

not we therefore be even as nothing in our own Eyes, adoring his marvellous Grace, and condescending Goodness, in taking such particular Notice of us of the human Race, *Creatures of Yesterday, that dwell in Houses of Clay, whose Foundation is in the Dust, which are crushed before the Moth?* What Reason have we to cry out, Lord, *what is Man that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man that thou visitest him!* How astonishing is it, that the *high and lofty One which inhabiteth Eternity*, should concern himself in so extraordinary a Manner for precarious dependent Beings, that are but just started up into Existence, and cannot subsist a Moment of ourselves! that he should make our Salvation the Subject of his eternal Councils, and take such wonderful Methods to accomplish it! that he should send his only begotten and eternal Son, to take upon him our frail and mortal Flesh, that he might save and redeem us! and should through him vouchsafe to communicate his Holy Spirit to assist, guide, sanctify, and comfort us, and to dwell in our Hearts, as in his living Temples! that he should stoop so low as to enter into a gracious Covenant with us, and oblige himself by the most sacred Promises and Engagements, to confer upon us the most inestimable Benefits! Is it

possible seriously to consider this, and not be filled with a devout Astonishment? Surely such marvellous Goodness, so far beyond all Parallel and all Comprehension, ought to make deep Impressions upon our Hearts; and how inexcusable shall we be if we do not with the greatest Thankfulness lay hold of his offered Grace and Favour!

Thirdly, Another Reflection which offereth itself on this Occasion, is this, That since God is from everlasting to everlasting, this sheweth what a proper Object he is for our Confidence and Trust. It would be Folly to place an absolute Dependence on the Power or Friendship of any Men upon Earth; since, let their Power seem at present never so great, or their Friendship to us never so firm and constant, yet they themselves are frail Creatures, whose Breath is in their Nostrils; their Life is precarious, and may not perhaps be of a Day's Continuance. *Put not your Trust in Princes, saith the Psalmist, nor in the Son of Man, in whom there is no Help: For his Breath goeth forth, he returneth to his Earth; in that very Day his Thoughts perish.* Psal. cxvi. 3. 4. *But the Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all Generations.* Ibid. Verse 10. Or, as it is expressed Psalm xciii. 2. *Thy Throne, O Lord, is established of old, thou art from everlasting.*
Amidst

DISCOURSE V. 101

Amidst all the Vicissitudes and Changes of Things; all the Confusions and Dangers to which the Church and People of God are exposed; this is their great Comfort and Security, and is insisted upon in Scripture, as a solid Foundation for their Hope and Confidence. *The eternal God is their Refuge, and underneath are the everlasting Arms.* Deut. xxxiii. 27. Let the Adversaries threaten the utmost they are capable of doing; they are but of Yesterday, perishing Dust and Ashes, and all their Fury is but a transient Puff. But *trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting Strength.* Isa. xxvi. 4. *The everlasting God, the Creator of the Ends of the Earth, fainteth not, neither is weary.* Isa. xl. 28. He neither slumbereth nor sleepeth; when all earthly Supports and Comforts fail, the eternal God still liveth, Yesterday, To-day, and for ever the same. The solid Earth may sink under our Feet, the Heavens may pass away, but God can never fail, or be less powerful, wise, just, and good, than he always is; and therefore can never disappoint the Hope of them that regularly put their Trust in him. Happy those that have this God to be their Refuge in Time of Trouble; he will give them Quietness and Assurance for ever.

Fourthly, Since God is eternal, how ama-

zing is the Folly of those, who by their wilful Impenitency and Disobedience expose themselves to his righteous Displeasure! Sin is an Offence committed against the Majesty and Authority of the eternal God. This shews its heinous Malignity and Demerit; when a Creature of Yesterday presumeth to rise up against the Author of its Being, who existeth from everlasting to everlasting; when it opposeth its own Will and fleshly Interests, and corrupt Capacities, to the holy Will, the all-comprehending Interests, and supreme Authority of the infinite Jehovah; when it persisteth in an obstinate Course of Disobedience, and refuseth his offered Mercy, and will not consent to the gracious Terms of his Covenant. Who can express the Impiety as well as Folly of such a Conduct? Accordingly the wise and righteous Governor of the World regardeth it with a just Displeasure, and will awfully punish it. He indeed beareth with Sinners in this present State, and they often take Encouragement from his Forbearance to harden themselves in their sinful Courses: *Because Sentence against an evil Work is not speedily executed, therefore the Hearts of the Sons of Men are fully set in them to do Evil.* Eccles. viii. xi. *But the Lord is not slack, as some Men count Slackness: A few Years of Forbearance*

ance may seem a long time to the Sinner, and he may on that account be apt to flatter himself with the Hopes of Impunity; but a Thousand Years are in the Sight of the eternal God but as one Day. When this State of Trial is at an End, then shall Wrath come upon impenitent Sinners to the uttermost. The Wise-man observes, that the Wrath of an earthly King is terrible, but how much more dreadful is the Wrath of an eternal God? The greatest Monarch upon Earth must depart in a few Years, and then all his Pomp, and the Terror of his Power, must perish with him in the Dust. *But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting King; at his Wrath the Earth shall tremble, and the Nations shall not be able to abide his Indignation.* Jer. x. 10. As he is an eternal God, so he threateneth Sinners with an everlasting Punishment. Our Saviour who is to be our Judge declareth, that the wicked *shall go away into everlasting Punishment.* Matth. xxv. 46. They shall, as St. Paul expresseth it, *be punished with everlasting Destruction, from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power.* 2 Thef. i. 9. For he liveth for ever to execute his own Threatenings. Surely this should be enough to fill the most hardened Sinners with Terror and Astonishment.

104 DISCOURSE V.

Verily, it is a fearful thing to fall into the Hands of the living God. Heb. x. 31.

Oh consider this ye that now forget God, and whilst the Day of Grace lasteth, lay hold of his offered Mercy, upon the most reasonable and gracious Terms of the Gospel-covenant; *now is the accepted Time, behold, now is the Day of Salvation.* He yet waiteth to be gracious to you; he stretcheth forth the Arms of his Mercy to receive you, notwithstanding your past Offences and Provocations, if you be heartily willing to forsake your evil Ways, and to return to him your sovereign Lord and chiefest God, through *Jesus Christ* the great Mediator of his Appointment. Come therefore, and humble yourselves deeply at his Footstool in the Sorrows of an ingenuous Repentance, acknowledging your manifold Transgressions, your Ingratitude, and Disobedience, and begging, that according to the Multitude of his tender Mercies, he would blot out all your Iniquities. Let it be the fixed Purpose of your Souls, that you will set yourselves heartily to abandon those sinful Courses, in which you have been hitherto engaged, especially the Sins that do most easily beset you; and that you will make it your sincere and earnest Endeavour to walk in a dutiful Obedience to his holy
and

and excellent Laws, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World. And from a Sense of your own Weakness and Insufficiency in yourselves, you must, to your own diligent Endeavours, add fervent Prayers to God for the Influences of his Holy Spirit, that he would create in you clean Hearts, and renew right Spirits within you; that he would deliver you from the Power of corrupt Lufts, and strengthen and enlarge holy and good Affections and Dispositions in your Souls; that being assisted by his Grace you may be fruitful in every good Work; and then there shall be a blessed Change in your State. You will be the Object of the divine Favour and Complacency, and have an Interest in the glorious promised Blessings of his Covenant.

This leads me to the last Reflection I would make upon this Subject, and that is, How happy are those who have this eternal God for their Father and Friend, their Portion and Felicity! And this is the Happiness of all those that love and serve him in Sincerity. As the Lord Jehovah is an eternal God, so he loveth his People with an everlasting Love. *I have loved thee, saith he, with an everlasting Love, therefore with Loving-kindness have I drawn thee.* Jer. xxxi. 3. And again, *With everlasting Kindness*

106 DISCOURSE V.

Kindness will I have Mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. Isa. liv. 8. His Mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him. Psal. ciii. 17. The Covenant he makes with them is an everlasting Covenant. Isa. lv. 3. The Salvation he will bless them with is an everlasting Salvation. *Israel shall be saved of the Lord with an everlasting Salvation; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded World without End.* Isa. xlv. 17. The Happiness good Men shall enjoy in his Presence is often described under the Character of eternal Life. And that which includeth this and every Blessing that can be conceived, is, that he himself will be their Portion for ever. This is included in that fundamental Promise of the New Covenant, *I will be a God unto thee.* What a Fountain of Consolation and Joy is here, enough to support the good Man when Nature is sinking in all its Powers, and this World and all that is in it are ready to forsake him! Then may he say with the devout Psalmist, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire beside thee. My Flesh and my Heart faileth; but God is the Strength of my Heart, and my Portion for ever.* Psal. cxxiii. 25, 26. What a stable and permanent Portion is this! A Portion which shall out-last the Injuries of Time,
and

DISCOURSE V. 107

and never know the least Diminution or Decay. Compared with this, what are all the boasted Possessions upon Earth? how unsatisfying in their Nature! Or if they were never so excellent and satisfying whilst they last, yet how temporary and short-lived is their Duration! They are as the Grass, and the Flower of the Field, whose agreeable Beauty and Verdure soon withereth. But God is an eternal Portion, which shall never disappoint the Hopes of his People. He is a Fountain of Bliss overflowing, a Sun of Glory ever shining and diffusing the happy Emanations of divine Life, and Light, and Love, through all the heavenly World, and filling Angels and Saints with unutterable Raptures of Wonder and Joy. This is the very Heaven of Heavens, that all God's Perfections are as himself eternal, and shall perpetually furnish new Matter for delightful Admiration. There shall be no room for unsatisfied Desires, or uneasy Cravings. If all the Fulness of Glory and Perfection that is in an eternal God can make the Saints happy, they shall be ever so. Surely the Consideration of such an everlasting Felicity should keep us from being weary in well-doing, and should cause us to think little of all the Labours and Difficulties we now meet with in the
Way

108 DISCOURSE V.

Way of our Duty. Nothing can possibly have a more animating Influence to engage us to a diligent persevering Obedience to the divine Commands, than this Persuasion, *That the Lord whom we serve, liveth and reigneth for ever; and that in his Presence is Fulness of Joy, and at his right Hand are Pleasures for evermore.*



On the Omnipresence of God.

DISCOURSE VI.

PSALM CXXXIX. 7, 8, 9, 10.

*Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or
whither shall I flee from thy Presence? If
I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there:
if I make my Bed in Hell, behold, thou art
there: if I take the Wings of the Morn-
ing, and dwell in the uttermost Parts of the
Sea; even there shall thy Hand lead me,
and thy right Hand shall hold me.*

AMONG all the divine Attributes,
there is none more glorious in it-
self, more worthy of our highest Admira-
tion, or more capable of being improved
to the most important Purposes of Reli-
gion,

110 DISCOURSE VI.

gion, than God's Immensity and Omnipresence. The Contemplation of it filleth the vast Capacities of the Soul, and spreadeth an awful and pleasing Astonishment through all its Powers. Whilst the Mind is thus engaged, it feeleth the Influence of the Divinity within it. A lively Sense of God's being ever present with us, tendeth to awaken every good Affection and Resolution in our Hearts, and giveth a resistless Force to every Argument on the Side of Religion and Virtue: Nor can any Thing possibly be more conducive to controul the unruly Appetites and Passions, and to render the whole Conduct uniformly regular and pure. Accordingly the Omnipresence of God is clearly asserted, and nobly described in the holy Scriptures, but no where more so than in this 139th Psalm, which is universally acknowledged to be a most sublime and admirable Composure. The Psalmist beginneth with contemplating the divine Omniscience, and thence by a very natural Transition proceedeth to consider God's Omnipresence. For it is a very just Way of arguing, that God must needs know all Things, since he is present every where. And here he giveth full Scope to the noble Transports of a devout Mind, and celebrateth the Immensity of the Supreme
Being

DISCOURSE VI. III

Being in the most exalted Strains of Devotion, in some measure corresponding, as far as human Imagination is able to reach, to the Grandeur and Sublimity of the Subject. *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there: if I make my Bed in Hell, behold, thou art there: if I take the Wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermost Parts of the Sea; even there shall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand shall hold me.* The Elevation of the Thoughts, and the Variety and Nobleness of the Figures and Expressions, cannot be sufficiently admired. He first observeth, in general, the utter Impossibility of escaping from the Presence of God: *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy Presence?* intimating, that it would be the vainest Thing in the World for him, or any Creature, to think of finding a Place within the whole Compass of Things where God is not. And then he particularly mentioneth several Parts of this vast Universe, and sheweth that God is present in them all: *If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there.* If I could take a Flight throughout that vast Expanse to which this Earth of ours is but a Point, in the Expectation of finding some Corner or other
in

112 DISCOURSE VI.

in all that unmeasurable Space, unpossessed of God, the Attempt would be vain; *Thou art there*, filling and possessing all those boundless Regions with thine Essence and thy Glory. He adds, *If I make my Bed in Hell, behold, thou art there.* The Word in the Original which we render *Hell*, admitteth of various Senses in Scripture. It is not merely taken for the State of Punishment of evil Angels or wicked Men, but it frequently signifieth the Grave, or State of the dead in general, and it is also used to signify deep subterraneous Places. The last of these is probably what the Psalmist principally intendeth in this Passage; but we may take them all in, as if he said, If I could descend to the nethermost Depths of the Earth, to which no mortal Eye hath yet been able to penetrate, or could I go to the unseen World and State of the dead, or even to the dismal Abodes prepared for the Punishment of the damned, still I could not hide myself from thee, for there also thou art present. He proceeds, Verse 9, 10. *If I take the Wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermost Parts of the Sea; even there shall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand shall hold me.* The taking the Wings of the Morning, is a noble Metaphor to signify the speediest Flight that can be imagined: For
 what

DISCOURSE VI. 113

what can be swifter than the Light? It shooteth to an immense Distance in an Instant. Now let us suppose that a Man could dart as swift as a Ray of Light to the Extremities of the wide Ocean, could he find any secret Cell or Cavern there, where he might lie concealed from God? The Word which we render the *Sea* might as well be rendered the 'West'; and then the Words would run thus, *If I take the Wings of the Morning and dwell in the uttermost Parts of the West; i. e. If I take my Flight as swift as a Sun-beam from the farthest Eastern Regions to the utmost Bounds of the West, as far as it is possible for the speediest Motion to carry me, shall I be any farther from God than I was before? Can I outrun the divine Presence? No. To what Part soever of the World I direct my Course, God is there before me, because he filleth all Places; and my very Motion or Flight would be a Proof of his Presence with me, since without his sustaining Influence to support my Flight, I could do nothing, I could neither live nor move: Even there shall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand shall hold me.*

Having given this brief Paraphrase of the Words, I now proceed to a more distinct Consideration of this Subject.

114 DISCOURSE VI.

And first, I shall offer something to explain what we are to understand by God's Immensity and Omnipresence.

Secondly, I shall endeavour to prove that this is a Perfection essentially belonging to the Supreme Being: And then shall conclude with some suitable Reflections by Way of practical Improvement.

First, I shall offer something to explain what we are to understand by God's Immensity and Omnipresence. And in general it must be observed, that as God's Eternity signifieth that he hath no Limits of Time or Duration, so his Immensity signifieth that he is without any Bounds of Place. Whatsoever existeth at all, must exist every where. With regard to every created Being, it must be acknowledged that there is some determinate Portion of Space to which it is present, and there are other Parts of Space to which it is not at the same Time present. This is what we evidently perceive as to corporeal Beings. We plainly see that they are circumscribed within certain Bounds, and can determine the Places to which they are present. And though Spirits are not extended like Bodies by Parts, one beyond another, nor can we distinctly explain the Manner in which they possess Space, yet they have also their proper Place; they are so here as
not

DISCOURSE VI. 115

not to be there at the same Time: Of this we have an Instance in our Souls or Spirits. We are conscious that our Existence and our active Power is bounded within certain Limits, and a determinate Space. Every individual Man is a distinct Soul dwelling in a particular Body, on which it immediately acteth, and to which it is immediately present. And though there may be other Spirits that are present to a much larger Portion of Space, and which have a wider Sphere of Activity, than our Souls, yet still they have also their determined Bounds, to which their perceptive and active Powers reach, and no farther. And in general we may conclude concerning every created Spirit, that however great and excellent it may be supposed to be, yet as it hath its Essence and Perfections limited, so there is a certain Space within which it existeth and acteth, and it is not present, nor capable of operating in all Places at once. But with respect to the Supreme Being, the great Jehovah, there is this Difference between him and all other Beings whatsoever, that he is essentially present in every Part of this vast Universe at once, and not only so, but beyond the Limits of created Existence.

1st, God is essentially present to every Part of this vast Universe at once, and to

116 DISCOURSE VI.

all the Beings that are within the Compass of the whole Creation : And this is what is properly called his Omnipresence. In whatever Part of this huge System we suppose the Supreme Being to exist and operate, he existeth and acteth in every other Part of it at the same Time, though removed at the greatest imaginable Distance. It can never be said, he is here but he is not there; and that whilst he is present in one Part of Space, there is some other Part of it in which he is not at that Time present. He is excluded from no Place, neither is he included in any, so as to be circumscribed within the Limits of it. As to other Beings, when they are present on Earth, they are not at the same Time in an opposite or far distant Part of it. But the great Jehovah is present by his infinite Essence in the Heights of Heaven, and in the Centre of the Earth, present to every Part of the Universe, not successively, first to one Part of it, then to another, but to all at once without any Motion or Change of Place, or passing from one to another : Nor can any Corner be found in the vast Extent of Nature, so distant and retired, or so small and inconsiderable, but still it must be said that God is there. And as he is present to every Part of Space, so also to every individual Being in that Space, whether

DISCOURSE VI. 117

whether corporeal or spiritual. He is present to every Part of Matter, to the whole inanimate Creation, and ordereth and regulateth its Motions and Appearances. He is also present to all Beings that have Life, from the highest and noblest of them to the least and meanest. What the Apostle saith particularly of Men holdeth equally of all other created Beings, sensitive, rational, and intellectual. *God is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our Being.* Acts xvii. 27, 28. It is not merely said, by him *we live, &c.* but *in him we live, and move, and have our Being*, to note his intimate Presence with us. So Col. i. 17. It is said, that *by him*, or, as it might properly be rendered, ‘in him’ *all Things consist*. His Essence may be said to be within the Essence of every Thing, and therefore it is as vain for any Creature to think of fleeing from God, and avoiding his Presence, as to think of fleeing from its own Essence.

But farther, to enlarge our Notions on this Subject, let it be considered, 2dly, That God is not only present to every Part of this vast universal System, which is what we properly mean when we say that he is omnipresent, but beyond the utmost Limits of the Creation; for this also is included in the Notion of Immen-

118 DISCOURSE VI.

ty. The Extent and Amplitude of this World which God hath made, is vast beyond what we are able to conceive. It exceedeth all mortal Measures; Millions of Miles are lost in the Computation. But after all, the Extension of Matter is not absolutely unlimited. The World hath Bounds, though no Mortal is able to assign those Bounds. But the divine Essence is absolutely infinite: And therefore, though it filleth and possesseth every Part of this vast Universe, yet it is not comprehended within the Limits of it. Beyond the utmost Extent of this material System we may still conceive Space, and in that Space, where there is no created Being, God is essentially present, no less than in the Works which he hath made. He can create more Worlds if he seeth fit, and on that Supposition would at once be equally present to those new Worlds as he is to this. God needeth not a Place out of himself, for he himself is his own Place. He existed in himself before there was any Creature formed, and still existeth in himself. And when he actually created this World, with all the various Orders of Beings it containeth, his Essence did not become circumscribed within the Limits of the World which he had made, but continueth as before, without any possible Bounds

DISCOURSE VI. 119

Bounds or Limits. *Behold,* (saith Solomon,) *the Heaven, and Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this House that I have builded?* 1 Kings viii. 27. This Earth which we inhabit is scarce an Atom, compared to the vast Extent and Compass of the Heavens. We are apt to conceive of the *Heaven, and Heaven of Heavens,* as the utmost Verge of the Creation, and as surrounding and encompassing the Earth and all Things. But though all created Things are within the Compass of the Heavens, the divine Essence is not contained there, but is also above and beyond it, beyond the utmost Limits of this material World.

As to the Manner in which God is every where present, this is what we are not able clearly to conceive. Here an awful Modesty becometh us in our Enquiries: And we must be careful in our Conceptions of the divine Immensity to remove every Thing that is unworthy of God, or unsuitable to the Spirituality and Perfection of his Nature. We must not therefore conceive of the divine Omnipresence in a way of material Extension. If God were corporeal he could not be every where present, for the greatest corporeal Magnitude must have Bounds; nor could he be where Matter or Body is, if he were himself a Body; since

120 DISCOURSE VI.

where a Body filleth any Place, other Bodies are for that Time excluded from it. When a Body possesseth Space, it is by Parts extending one beyond another. But it cannot without the greatest Absurdity be supposed, that Part of God or of the divine Essence is in one Part of Space, or of the Universe, and Part in another. He is all every where. Where-ever he is present, he is present in his whole Essence, which is simple and indivisible; his infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness is present. He is present after the Manner of a Spirit, as the Psalmist here signifieth, when he saith, *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy Presence?* And tho' this is what we have not a clear Idea of, yet it is certain, that there is such a Thing as spiritual Presence, distinct from material Extension, *i. e.* a Presence not by Situation of Parts extending one beyond another, but a Presence by conscious Perception, and active Power and Energy. Of this we have an Instance in our own Souls. We plainly perceive that our Souls are present in and with our Bodies; and that they cannot be said to be so immediately present in any other Part of Space, or to any other Bodies, as they are to these individual Bodies. But if the Enquiry be, how it is that the Soul is present to the Body, it must

DISCOURSE VI. 121

must be said that it is not by being co-extended to the several Parts of it. The Body hath its Head in one Place, its Feet in another, its Arms in another. But we must not imagine that the Soul hath also its different Parts, answering to the several Parts of the Body. The whole Soul is indivisibly present to every Part of the Body, or of this little corporeal System; it at once governeth and actuateth the whole, and every Member of it; and thus may not improperly be said, as some have expressed it, to be all in all, and all in every Part. So that here is an Instance of a simple, individual, conscious Being, that is present to different Parts of Space or Body, without being itself extended by Parts, or having any corporeal Magnitude. And we may conceive a created Spirit or Mind, superior to the Soul of Man, immediately present to a much larger Quantity and Extension of Matter, and exerting a greater Power over it, than the Soul doth over the human Body. And this may assist us to form some Notion of the infinite Mind, as present to every Part of the universal System, present as truly as our Souls are present to our Bodies, but in an infinitely nobler Sense; and without those Imperfections and Defects, which the Presence of our Souls in our Bodies is attended with.

Our

122 DISCOURSE VI.

Our Souls in several Respects have a Dependence on these Bodies in their Operations, and receive Impressions from external Objects by the bodily Organs. But God cannot in this Sense be regarded as the Soul of the World, as some of the ancient Philosophers represented him. He is present throughout this vast System, but not as making a Part of this mundane System, as the Soul is of the human Constitution, but as himself the Sovereign independent Cause, the Maker and Ruler of the whole, the absolute Lord of the Creation, all which he at first made, and which dependeth upon him for its continued Existence.

It appeareth from the Account that hath been given, that God's Immensity and Omnipresence signifieth, that his Essence is not circumscribed within any Limits of Space; that he is present in every Part of this vast World which he hath created, and to all the Beings contained in it, and that not successively, first in one Place, and afterwards in another, but to the whole at once; present not as a huge Body extended by Parts, but as an infinite Spirit, or active vital Intelligence, possessing and governing the universal Frame, and exercising an uncontrolled Dominion in all Places and over all Things. Nor is he confined with-

in

DISCOURSE VI. 123

in the Limits of the Creation, but existeth beyond the utmost Bounds of this material World, or created Existence.

Having endeavoured to explain what we are to understand by the divine Immensity and Omnipresence, as far as we are capable of conceiving it, let us now proceed, according to the Order proposed,

Secondly, To offer some Arguments to prove, that God is immense, and every where present.

And first, In general this may be argued from the absolute Perfection of the Supreme Being. It cannot be denied that it argueth greater Perfection and Excellence of Nature to be present every where, and to exert active Power and Intelligence through the whole Universe at once, than to be limited to certain Parts of Space, and circumscribed within certain Bounds. If God were thus limited and circumscribed, he must be finite in his Essence, he must be so in his Perfections too. He might on that Supposition be possibly greater than he is; and this is repugnant to the Idea of an absolutely perfect Being, which yet seemeth to be one of the most universally acknowledged Notions of the Deity.

But particularly it is to be observed, that God's Omnipresence or Immensity hath a necessary Connection with his Omnipotency

tency or almighty Power. For that Power cannot be said to be almighty, which cannot act every where at once, and which is limited to certain Places and Objects, and only capable of acting within a certain Compass; and that Being which can act every where at once, and can do all Things, must exist every where. If the Power be infinite and of universal Extent, the Essence from which the Power is inseparable must be so too.

God's being every where present, and having no Bounds or Limits of his Essence, may be farther argued from his necessary Existence. That which owed not its Being or Essence to any Cause, but existed necessarily of itself from everlasting, can have no Limits of its Essence. For whence should such Limitations proceed? Whatever is limited, is limited by some Cause, and therefore that which derived not its Being and Perfections from any Cause, cannot be limited by any Cause, and consequently can have no Limits at all. God is the first Cause, and is himself uncaused: He existeth of himself by the absolute Necessity of his own most perfect Nature. And it seemeth to be a just and solid Way of arguing, that by the same Necessity by which he existeth any where he existeth every where; there is nothing to
limit

DISCOURSE VI. 125

limit him to a particular Place, or to a particular determined Quantity of Being.

Thus we see that there is an inseparable Connection between God's Immensity and Omnipresence, and his other divine Perfections, and that we cannot deny this to God, without in effect undeifying him.

But 2dly, Besides these general Reasonings, the Omnipresence of God may be farther argued from the Proofs and Evidences of the divine Presence, which appear in every Part of the Universe: When we survey this universal System, the Extent of which transcendeth all human Imagination; Reason and Nature lead us to conclude, that he that created all these Things out of Nothing, must have no Bounds to his Existence or Power, and that he must needs be present to every Part of this stupendous Frame, which he at first formed, and which he continually upholdeth. All created Things have a constant Dependence upon the first Cause, and can no more continue to exist without him, than without him they could at first bring themselves into Existence: And since on him all Things, one as well as another, necessarily depend, he is present to all Things, one as well as another. The Order and Harmony that is maintained in this great System, amidst the most unconceivable

ceivable Variety of Things, doth plainly demonstrate to a considering Mind, the continual Presence of the great Author of Nature, sustaining, actuating, governing the universal Frame, and penetrating to the inmost Essences and first Principles of Things. With regard to the inanimate Creation or material World, what we usually call the Laws and Course of Nature is in Reality to be ascribed to the constant Influence of the Almighty ever present to his own Work; of which that universal gravitating Force which is continually acting upon every Atom of Matter, seems to be an amazing Instance. And as to the vital, sensitive, intellectual World, the nobler Parts of the Creation, their admirable Powers need the constant Presence and supporting Influence of the first Cause; nor have any of them an independent Existence; and since in all Parts of the Universe that we know, we may observe the Proofs and Evidences of the divine Power, Wisdom, and active Intelligence, we may justly conclude, that the same Wisdom and Power operateth also in those Parts of this vast System that we are unacquainted with, and that therefore he is equally present there as well as here; for it is reasonable to believe that God is where he operateth, and that therefore he is every where, since
 he

DISCOURSE VI. 127

he operateth every where. It is no Objection againſt this, that we cannot diſtinctly conceive or explain the Manner of it; how it is that the infinite Mind pervadeth and is intimately preſent to the whole System. We cannot, as was before hinted, explain how our own Souls, which are not extended by Parts, are preſent and operate in different Parts of our Bodies at once; and how by a mere Determination of our Wills, we at once move ſeveral Parts of our Frame; and yet the Thing itſelf we can have no Doubt of. And we have as full Proof of an univerſal Mind operating throughout this great System, as we have of our own Souls operating in our Bodies; and therefore, though we cannot explain the Manner of it, ſhould no more doubt of this than of the other: And who will undertake to prove, that it is not as poſſible for an infinite Spirit to be preſent to all Parts of the Universe at once, as it is for a finite Mind, that hath no Extension of Parts, to be preſent by its conſcious, perceptive, and active Powers, at the ſame Time, to different Parts of this leſſer bodily System?

3dly, It ought alſo to have great Weight with us to conſider, that there hath been a general Conſent of Mankind in this important Truth, that God is every where preſent.

Some

128 DISCOURSE VI.

Some Sense of this seemeth to be almost indelibly impressed in the Hearts of Men, and which can scarce ever be utterly erased. Hence those conscious Terrors which wicked Men often feel, even for Crimes committed in Secret, and concealed from the View of the World, arising from an inward Conviction that they cannot shun or hide themselves from the divine Presence. All the Oaths and Appeals to God, so usual in all Ages and Nations for Confirmation, and for putting an End to Strife; the Prayers that have been offered, the Vows that have been made, and the solemn Acts of Religion and divine Worship, suppose the Presence of the Deity: And in general it may be said, that they who have acknowledged a God and a Providence, have also generally joined in acknowledging that God is every where present. It is true that many have absurdly worshipped topical Deities, Gods of particular Countries, of the Hills, Groves, or Vallies, but these were regarded as inferior Deities; still they had generally some Notion of a Supreme Being present in all Parts of the Universe. It were easy to mention many Testimonies from the ancient heathen Writers, which have been often produced to this Purpose. Whithersoever thou turnest thyself, (saith a celebrated

brated ancient Philosopher,) thou wilt find God meeting thee; nothing is void of his Presence, he filleth his own Work. It is a Saying of one of the ancient Poets, that all Things are full of God. Of another of them, that God goeth through the Earth and Tracts of the Sea, and the vast Heaven. And of a third, God is whatsoever thou see'st, whithersoever thou movest. Indeed some of them seem to have carried this too far. They were so sensible of the continual Presence of the Deity, as supporting, animating, and actuating all Things, that they sometimes confounded God with the World or universal Nature. But however intimately present God is to all Things, yet still there is an infinite Difference between him the supreme Cause, the absolutely perfect Being, and the Creatures, or those imperfect Beings that from him derive their Existence. He is most intimately near to them, and supporteth their inmost Essences; but still he continueth to be pure and unmixed, absolutely distinct from all other Beings, though distant from none.

4thly, The last Argument I shall offer to shew the Immensity and Omnipresence of God, is drawn from express Testimonies of Holy Scripture. Eminently remarkable to this Purpose are the Words I

130 DISCOURSE VI.

have chosen for the Subject of this Discourse, in which the Psalmist representeth it to be absolutely impossible to flee from the divine Presence, or to find a Place where God is not. He describeth him as present in Heaven, Earth, and Hell. Whithersoever he could think to bend his Course, still he findeth himself obliged to say to God, *Thou art there*; thou thyself in thine own infinite Essence art immediately present. There are other Passages of Scripture that harmonize with this, and tend to furnish us with noble Ideas of the divine Immensity and Omnipresence. Such is that in *Jer. xxiii. 24.* *Can any hide himself in secret Places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: do not I fill Heaven and Earth? saith the Lord.* By Heaven and Earth in Scripture Language, the Universe or whole Extent of created Existence is usually signified; when he is therefore represented as filling Heaven and Earth, it signifieth that there is no Part of the universal Frame which is not possessed by him, and to which he is not present; for that cannot be said to fill a Space, which leaveth any Part of it vacant or empty. To the same Purpose is that magnificent Passage, *Isa. lxvi. 1.* *Thus saith the Lord, The Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my Footstool: where is the House that ye build unto me? and*
where

DISCOURSE VI. 131

where is the Place of my Rest? Intimating, that it would be the greatest Folly to imagine, that the divine Essence could be comprehended in any material Temple built by human Art, so as to be confined there. The whole Universe is his Temple, which he filleth with his Presence, nor can he be bounded within these Limits. For as *Solomon* expresseth it in the Passage I mentioned before; *Will God indeed dwell upon the Earth? Behold the Heaven, and Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this House that I have builded!* 1 Kings viii. 27. *The Lord is said to be God in Heaven above, and in the Earth beneath.* Josh. ii. 11. And he is called the *Possessor of Heaven and Earth.* Gen. xiv. 19, 22. We are told that *the Lord doeth whatsoever he pleaseth in Heaven and in Earth, in the Seas, and in all deep Places,* Psal. cxxxv. 6. where it is intimated, that God operateth in every Part of the Creation, and therefore he is present in every Place. And it is to be observed, that all along in Scripture, what we usually call the Works of Nature are ascribed to the continual Influence and Agency of the Almighty; and he is represented as not only having settled the Order of these Things in the Beginning, but as still effect-

ing them by his Power, and conducting them by his Wisdom.

Hither we may also refer all those Passages of Holy Writ, which speak of God's universal Inspection as extending to all Places and all Things. We are told that there is not *any Creature that is not manifest in his Sight; but all Things are naked and opened unto his Eyes.* Heb. iv. 13. And that *the Eyes of the Lord are in every Place, beholding the evil and the good.* Prov. xv. 3. And if his Eyes are in every Place, he himself is in every Place. For if he were not every where present, something might possibly be concealed from him, and escape his Notice. Where-ever we are, still we are represented as encompassed on every Side with the Divinity. *Thou compasshest my Path, and my lying down, (saith the Psalmist,) and art acquainted with all my Ways. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine Hand upon me.* Psal. cxxxix. 3, 5. Yea he is represented as so intimately present to all Men, that he searcheth the Hearts, and trieth the Reins of all the Children of Men. Finally, we are taught in Scripture to regard it as no less sure that God is present with us where-ever we are, than that we ourselves exist: *for that it is in him that we live, and move, and have our Being.* Acts xvii. 28.

From

DISCOURSE VI. 133

From the several Considerations that have been offered, it appeareth with great Evidence, that God is immense, and every where present; and yet there have been Objections made against this as well as against other Attributes of the divine Nature. Some few there have been among professed Christians, who have held that God as to his Essence or Substance is only in Heaven, from whence he sendeth forth his Power and Virtue to other Parts of the Creation. But if this Power and Virtue be any thing real, what can it be but the divine Essence and Being itself, from which his Power or Virtue is inseparable? To suppose a naked divine Power or operative Virtue without the divine Essence to which it belongeth, is very absurd. Where-ever God is present by his Power and efficacious Energy, he is present by his Essence. As to those Passages of Scripture that speak of God's dwelling in Heaven, which is called his Dwelling-place, and his holy Habitation, it is evident that they are not to be understood as if his Presence or Substance were circumscribed there, and he were not present any where else; since we are assured in the same Scriptures (as hath been already shewn) *that Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain God, and that he filleth Heaven and Earth.* The Intention therefore

K 3

134 DISCOURSE VI.

therefore of such Expressions must be only to signify, that it is in Heaven that God exhibiteth the most illustrious Displays of his Glory and Majesty. On which account it is sometimes called his Throne. So he is represented as dwelling in *Zion*, and in the Temple and Tabernacle of old; not that he was confined within the Walls of a material Temple, (for in this Sense *he dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands.* Acts vii. 48.) but because he there gave special Manifestations of his gracious Presence to his People, and appointed the public Rites of his Worship to be there peculiarly solemnized. In like Manner when God is represented as near to his Saints, and as dwelling in them, it signifieth that they are the Objects of his Love and Favour, and that he exerteth his special gracious Operations in and upon their Souls: Whereas the wicked are represented as far off from God; not that they can possibly be distant from his essential Presence, for in this Sense he is not far from any of us, since, as it is expressed in the Passage before cited, *in him we live, and move, and have our Being*; but he is not present to them, as he is to good Men, in a Way of Grace and Favour. Finally, whereas we sometimes read of God's coming down from Heaven, as *Gen. xi. 5. Isa. lxiv. 1.* It is plain from other Passages

Passages of Scripture, that this cannot be intended to insinuate, as if God did not fill all Places, and therefore needed to remove from one Place to another; but it is to be understood of some signal Appearances and Manifestations of his divine Power and Providence, that tend in a special Manner to awaken and engage the Attention of Mankind.

As to what some have alledged, as if it were a Disparagement to the Glory and Majesty of God, to suppose him to be present in Places, and to Objects that are unclean and offensive, as he must be if he be every where present; this Pretence, tho' it putteth on a Shew of consulting the Honour of God, doth really argue mean and unworthy Notions of the Deity. If there be Places and Things that are nauseous and offensive to our Senses, our being affected by them in the Manner we now are, is wholly owing to our bodily Organs; and if we either had no such bodily Organs, or they were disposed after a different Manner, we should either not be affected with these Things at all, or not be affected in the same Way. And it were very absurd to imagine, that the pure Essence of the supreme and infinite Mind which hath no bodily Parts or Passions, can either contract any Defilement, or receive disagreeable

136 DISCOURSE VI.

able Impressions or Sensations from material Objects, or what we call bodily Pollution.

Having endeavoured to explain what we are to understand by the divine Immensity and Omnipresence, and considered the Evidences of it both from Scripture and Reason, we should now proceed to make some proper Reflections on this important Subject; but these must be reserved to another Opportunity.

On the Omnipresence of God.

DISCOURSE VII.

PSAL. CXXXIX. 7, 8, 9, 10.

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there: if I make my Bed in Hell, behold, thou art there: if I take the Wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermost Parts of the Sea; even there shall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand shall hold me.

IN discoursing on these Words I proposed,

First, To offer something for explaining what we are to understand by God's Immenfity and Omnipresence.

Secondly, To prove that this is a Perfection essentially belonging to the Supreme Being.

Both

138 DISCOURSE VII.

Both these have been considered; and I come now to make some proper Reflections on this important Subject.

And 1st, Is God immense and every where present? then how glorious and adorable should this render him in our Esteem, and how mean and inconsiderable are all the Creatures compared with him! There is none of God's Attributes that hath a greater Tendency to excite in us the most high and admiring Thoughts of his divine Majesty than this. The better to affect our own Souls, let us contemplate the Extent of the Universe about us. Let us look first on the Globe which we inhabit, the Earth and Ocean. It is a huge Body, of great Compass and Magnitude. What is Man or all the Millions of Men on the Face of the Earth compared with the Earth itself? And yet this Earth is but a diminutive Spot compared to the surrounding Heavens. Let us next consider those innumerable fixed Stars that look like little glittering Spangles dispersed in the vast Expanse: Let us consider them, I say, as Bodies of prodigious Magnitude as well as Splendor, and probably, according to the Judgment of the ablest Astronomers, so many Suns; each of them for ought we know like our Sun, the Centre of a particular System, with Planets in different
Orbits

DISCOURSE VII. 139

Orbits performing their Revolutions round them: and all of them removed at such an amazing Distance from one another and from us, as exceedeth all human Computation. Let us consider farther, that besides the Stars which are beheld, whether with the naked Eye or by the Help of Telescopes, there may be many other Stars or Worlds, no less grand and wonderful, which yet the too great Distance hath rendered absolutely invisible to us. And then when we have put Thought to the utmost Stretch in ranging to the farthest Bounds of the Creation, and our Imagination is lost and swallowed up in the wide Tracts of the unmeasurable Space; let us recover ourselves from the Astonishment into which this hath cast us, and reflect that God filleth and possesseth every Part of this vast Universe; and that there cannot be the least Thing supposed in all this prodigious Extent and Compass of Nature, but he is most intimately present with it. He at once sustaineth and governeth, by his most wise and mighty Influence, all these innumerable Regions, with all the Orders of Beings contained in them. Yea, let us again, when we have as it were arrived to the utmost Bounds of this material World, though this, as hath been already observed, is what human Imagination is scarce

140 DISCOURSE VII.

scarce able to reach; yet let us suppose ourselves got to the extremest Limits of it, and thence take a Flight into the vacant boundless Space, and there spring forward to Infinity; still we are in the Reach of God, and surrounded with the divine all-comprehending Essence, *still in him we live, and move, and have our Being.*

Oh amazing Thought! Who can comprehend the Greatness and Majesty of the immense Jehovah? How can such Beings as we are, circumscribed within certain Bounds, and existing within a determinate Space, form a clear and adequate Idea of absolute Immensity, or of a Being that existeth every where at once, and is without all Bounds? In this as well as other Respects it may be justly said, that *his Greatness is unsearchable.* Psa. cxlv. 3. This World, let us suppose it never so large, is but finite; and what Proportion is there between finite and infinite? God is represented in the noble Expressions of the Prophet, as having *measured the Waters* (the Waters of the vast Ocean) *in the Hollow of his Hand,* and as having *comprehended the Dust of the Earth in a Measure, and weighed the Mountains in Scales, and the Hills in a Balance;* yea, which is still more wonderful, he is represented as having *meted out Heaven* (all the vast unimaginable and next to infinite

DISCOURSE VII. 141

finite Compass of the Heavens) *with the Span*. When we consider this, how should we fall prostrate in the deepest Adorations of the infinite Jehovah! *Behold*, (as the Prophet there addeth,) *the Nations are as a Drop of a Bucket, and are counted as the small Dust of the Balance*. This is representing Mankind under a very diminutive Idea. But as if even this were too advantageous a Comparison, and were magnifying them too much, they are represented as Nothing, and, by a wonderful Manner of Expression, as less than Nothing. *All Nations before him are as Nothing, and they are counted to him less than Nothing, and Vanity*. Isa. xl. 12, 15, 17. It is impossible to carry it farther, or to make a more affecting Representation of God's immense Greatness, and of the Meanness, the Diminutiveness of all created Beings compared with him. In comparing ourselves with our Fellow-creatures we are often apt to strut and look big; but turn thy Views, vain Mortal, to the immense Jehovah, and then swell, and assume, and think highly of thyself if thou canst. How would Thoughts of this Kind, if properly impressed upon our Hearts, mortify every Motion of Pride within us! How little should we think then of all the Pomp and Bustle, and all the boasted Grandeur of this vain World!

How

142 DISCOURSE VII.

How little should we think of our own Persons and Services; yea, and of our most exalted Praises and Acts of Devotion! When our Hearts are duly affected with a Sense of God's immense Greatness, then it is that we are best disposed to adore his matchless Condescension towards the human Race. Then it is that we are ready to say with the devout Psalmist, *What is Man that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of Man that thou visitest him?* What is Man that is a Worm, and the Son of Man that is but a Worm, that a Being of such incomprehensible Greatness and Glory should open his Eyes upon such an one? Then it is that God's wonderful Grace in sending his own Son to take upon him our Nature, that he might save lost Mankind, and in entering into Covenant with us, and promising to raise us to a complete Felicity in the eternal Enjoyment of him the supreme, the infinite Good, shineth forth with the most amazing Glory. Our Souls are swallowed up in Astonishment and Rapture. We are sometimes ready to say, How can these Things be? But nothing is impossible to infinite Love. It dependeth wholly on his free and sovereign Grace, how far and in what Methods and Instances he will chuse to exercise and display his Goodness to his Creatures.

DISCOURSE VII. 143

tures. And it is becoming his infinite Majesty to take a wonderful Way of doing it, which no human Mind can comprehend. His Condescension, like his Greatness and Dignity, is beyond all Parallel. What shall we render unto the Lord? What is left us but to admire and adore, and to shew the grateful Sense we have of his marvellous Loving-kindness, both by our thankful Acknowledgments, and by keeping his Commandments, and walking in Holiness and Righteousness before him all the Days of our Lives, which is the best Way we can take to promote our own Happiness, and to answer the great Designs of his Love and Mercy towards us?

2dly, The Consideration of God's Immenfity and Omniprefence may help us to form a Notion of God's univerfal Providence as extending to all his Works, the moft inconfiderable not excepted. Men of fceptical Minds, when they hear God represented as exercifing his Care over all the Creatures, even to the leaft and meaneft of them; when they find the Scriptures declaring, that *the very Hairs of our Head are all numbered*, and that not a Sparrow falleth to the Ground without our heavenly Father. Matth. x. 29, 30. that he feedeth the Fowls of the Air, and cloaths

144 DISCOURSE VII.

the Lilies of the Field. *Matth.* vi. 26, 28. &c. They are ready to think this a strange Doctrine. They cannot bring themselves to believe, that the Supreme Being concerneth himself about such little Things as these. This they represent as an unworthy Employment for so glorious a Majesty, and as inconsistent with the perfect Tranquillity he must be supposed to enjoy. But this proceedeth from their measuring the divine Being by themselves. It will contribute to remove these Difficulties, to consider that God is continually present in his infinite Essence in every Part of the vast Universe which he hath made; and where-ever the divine Essence is, it is necessarily accompanied with the divine Attributes and Perfections which are inseparable from that Essence, with infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness. And can he be supposed to be intimately present to all his Creatures, and yet exercise no Care over them? As he at once filleth and possesseth the whole Compass of the Creation, it is no more Trouble to him to take Care of all Things at once, than if he had only one single Thing to mind, since he is equally essentially present to all Things as he is to any one. We who are limited Beings, cannot attend to many Things at once, and therefore are often obliged

DISCOURSE VII. 145

obliged to neglect smaller Matters, and confine our Attention to Things that more nearly concern us. But it is otherwise with the infinite all-comprehending Mind. As it is impossible that any Thing relating to any of his Creatures should escape his Notice, so the Variety of Things do not in the least distract or embarrass his Attention, or disturb his perfect Serenity. Such a Supposition can only arise from narrow and limited Notions of the Deity. The Epicureans, who supposed the Presence and Being of the Divinity to be confined to Heaven, were inconsistent with themselves when they denied the Care of Providence to extend to the Affairs of this lower World. No Wonder that they supposed a great Variety of Things might incommode and distract such limited Deities. But if we believe, as Reason and Scripture oblige us, that God is essentially present to every Part of this stupendous System, and to every the meanest Creature he hath made, we shall not be surpris'd that his providential Care doth likewise extend to every Creature, and that without Distraction or Confusion.

3dly, Is God immense, and every where present? then how inexcusable are those that live in an habitual Forgetfulness of him! It is given as the Character of a

146 DISCOURSE VII.

wicked Man, that *God is not in all his Thoughts.* Psal. x. 4. How many are there to whom this Character belongs! They go on from Day to Day without one serious Thought of God, or rendering him that Homage and Obedience that is his Due. They think as little of him as if there were no such Being at all, or at least, as if they looked upon him to be removed at a great Distance from them, and that he did not concern himself about any of their Actions. What a strange Folly and Corruption of Heart doth this argue! One should think we could as well forget our own Existence, as forget that God on whom we every Moment depend, and in whom *we live, and move, and have our Being.* Yet so it is, that in our present degenerate State, though God be as near to us as we are to ourselves, yet we are, for the most part, unmindful of him, and apt to live in an habitual Estrangement from him. Our Thoughts are continually carried out to a Variety of Objects, roving on a thousand Vanities; the veriest Trifles in Nature engage our Attention, we pursue and embrace mere Shadows, whilst at the same Time we neglect him who alone is more to us than all. This Forgetfulness of God lieth at the Foundation of our Disobedience. And can any Thing be
more

DISCOURSE VII. 147

more inexcusable? What Pretence can be alledged for not turning our Thoughts and Views to him, when every Thing about us, and within us, should put us in mind of a present Deity, and when the glorious Evidences of his Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, are continually before our Eyes? But know, O Sinner, that though thou art unmindful of him, thou art always under the Inspection of his Eye, and within the Reach of his Arm. Wherever thou art, whatever thou doest, in all thy Extravagancies of licentious Mirth, and Indulgence of thy darling Appetites, he is ever with thee, and seeth all thy Ways, and marketh all thy Steps. Now because he beareth with thy Offences and Provocations for a while, and doth not immediately execute his just Judgments upon thee, thou dost not think of his Presence. But if he be not present with thee, how comest thou to live and move? how art thou supported in Being? And know, that the Time is coming when it will be impossible for the most obstinate Sinners to forget him, when they shall feel him to be present, whether they will or no; present, not in the chearing Smiles of his Love and Favour, but in the insupportable Terrors of his just Wrath and Vengeance. Oh *consider this ye that now forget God, lest he*

148 DISCOURSE VII.

tear you in Pieces, and there be none to deliver. Psal. l. 22.

This leads me to add, 4thly, That nothing can be better fitted to produce and awaken in our Souls a holy Fear of the divine Majesty, than a due Consideration of his Immensity and Omnipresence. If God were at a Distance from us, however mighty and powerful we believed him to be, yet still we might entertain some Hope to escape his Notice, and consequently to avoid the Effects of his Displeasure. But when we consider that that infinitely powerful, wise, and righteous Being, on whom it dependeth to make us happy or miserable to Eternity, is ever present with us, and that it is absolutely impossible for us to find a Place in the whole Compass of the Creation where God is not, surely this if any Thing should make us serious, should correct the thoughtless Levity of our Minds, and inspire us with a sacred Awe of his divine Majesty. Not to fear Creatures like ourselves in a good Cause, is a noble Fortitude; but not to fear the almighty and omnipresent Jehovah is not Courage but Madness. For if he setteth himself to punish, whither canst thou flee to shelter thee from infinite Vengeance? In what Corner canst thou hide thyself from him who is present in every Part of Space,

DISCOURSE VII. 149

Space, who penetrateth to the inmost Essence, and can cause his Wrath to lodge and inhabit in thy very Soul, and fill all thy Powers with Horror and Anguish? *Acquaint now thyself* therefore *with him, and be at Peace, thereby Good shall come unto thee.* Job xxii. 21. Endeavour now, whilst there is a proper Time and Opportunity for it, to avert his just and awful Displeasure by a sincere Repentance, and laying hold of his offered Mercy upon the gracious Terms of the new Covenant.

5thly, Let us improve the Consideration of God's Omnipresence for quickening and engaging us to a strict Attention to our whole Conduct. Since God is every where and at all times present with us, let us act continually as in his Sight, and set him always before us. This would have a noble Influence on practical Religion, and would make us careful to order our Conversation aright. The whole of a religious Life is very properly expressed in Scripture by walking with God, and walking before the Lord. Thus it is said concerning those excellent Persons *Enoch* and *Noah*, that they *walked with God.* Gen. v. 22. vi. 9. And it was the Command of God to *Abraham*, *Walk before me, and be thou perfect.* Gen. xvii. 1. and the Psalmist declareth it as his solemn Resolution,

150 DISCOURSE VII.

I will walk before the Lord in the Land of the living. Psal. cxvi. 9. This signifieth the acting in our whole Course with a constant Regard to a present Deity. And this is what the wise Man hath in View in that excellent Advice, *Prov. xxiii. 17. Be thou in the Fear of the Lord all the Day long.* Not as if we were always to have our Thoughts actually fixed upon God, which is neither possible for us in this present State, nor, if it were possible, would it be our Duty. But we are so far to be under the habitual Influence of an awful Sense of his Presence with us, that we must not dare to allow ourselves in any Thing that is contrary to his holy Nature and Will, but must endeavour to approve ourselves to him in our whole Temper and Deportment.

A Sense of God's Presence, if duly impressed upon the Heart, would both be an effectual Preservative against Sin and Temptation, and would quicken and animate us to the Performance of our Duty.

We should improve it as a Preservative against Sin and Temptation, especially against those Sins to which we are tempted by the Hopes of committing them with Secrecy, and concealing them from the View of the World. It cannot be denied that the Presence of a Man of great Wisdom

DISCOURSE VII. 151

dom and Virtue would be a powerful Restraint even upon those Sinners that seem most addicted to their Vices. Hence some of the ancient heathen Moralists recommended it as an useful Piece of Advice that might help to preserve Men from a base and wicked Conduct, to set some eminent Person before them, such as *Cato* was, and to act as if he stood by and observed. But how much greater Force would it have to consider ourselves as continually in the Presence of a pure and holy Deity, who hateth Sin with a perfect Hatred, who is of impartial Justice and Righteousness, as well as of almighty Power. A Sense of this fixed in the Heart would disarm the most dangerous Temptations; it would fortify the Soul against all the Discouragements and Terrors of the World on the one Hand, and against all the Snares and Pleasures of Sin on the other; it would stem the Violence of inordinate Appetites and Passions, and enable us to say with *Joseph* in Circumstances of the greatest Temptation, *How shall I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God?* The unclean Fornicator and Adulterer would not venture to gratify his vicious Inclinations before a Person of great Gravity and Authority; and how much less would he dare to do it if he consider-

152 DISCOURSE VII.

ed and believed, that at that Instant God is with him, and seeth him in those Privacies which he hath chosen for the Scene of his impure Dalliances. Surely this if any Thing would damp his guilty Joys, and quell the Rage of Lust. The unjust and fraudulent Person, who is most addicted to unlawful Arts of Gain, and ready to applaud himself when he can practise them without being detected, would not dare to cheat and to defraud, if he knew that at that very Time a wise and just Magistrate had his Eye upon him, and observed the Wrong. And ought it not to have a greater Influence to consider, that the great and righteous Judge of all the Earth is present, whom it is impossible to deceive? If we could conceal our Wickedness from God, we need not be comparatively much concerned, though the whole World were acquainted with it. But if God knoweth it, what would it avail us though we could conceal it from our Fellow-mortals, since eternal Life and Death are in his Hands, and by him our final State must be irreversibly determined? Go therefore whosoever thou art that art tempted to commit Sin, and hopest to do it undiscovered, seek out some secret Place where thou mayest securely perpetrate thy Wickedness, and if thou canst find a Place
where

DISCOURSE VII. 153

where God is not, there indulge thy criminal Desires without Restraint. But if that is impossible, wilt thou be so presumptuous as to allow thyself to do what he abhorreth, and what thou knowest he hath forbidden, in the Sight and Presence of God himself? What is this but to affront him to his Face, and set infinite Power and Justice at Defiance, which must needs end in the Misery and Ruin of the daring Offender?

And as a Sense of God's Presence should be an effectual Preservative against Sin and Temptation, so it should have a mighty Influence to quicken and animate us to the Performance of our Duty. It should make us especially careful over the Frame of our Spirits in immediate Acts of religious Worship. On such Occasions particularly we should regard him as immediately present, and fix the Eye of Faith on an invisible Deity. How would this prevent or check the Rovings of a vain Imagination, and keep our Hearts steady and fixed, and spread a sacred Awe through all our Powers! This should engage us to worship him as an infinite Spirit in Spirit and Truth, not by corporeal Images, as if the Godhead were like unto Gold, or Silver, or Stone, graven by Art and Man's Device: for what Image can represent the

154 DISCOURSE VII.

immense Jehovah, who filleth Heaven and Earth? but we must worship him with a pure Adoration, realizing him to our Minds as present in his infinite Majesty and incomparable Perfections. And it is a great Encouragement to us, that as God is present every where, we may *pray* to him *every where, lifting up holy Hands, without Wrath and Doubting*, as the Apostle speaks, *1 Tim. ii. 8*. And not only should a Sense of God's Presence influence us in the immediate Exercises of Religion, but it should make us careful and diligent in every other Part of our Duty. It should engage us so to comport ourselves in our general Conduct as to secure his Favour and Approbation, and to think, speak, and act, as knowing that God now seeth us. If we set the Lord always before us, how desirous should we be to get our Souls furnished and adorned with every Virtue that could render us pleasing to that most holy and glorious Being! We should then make it our constant Care to be righteous before God, walking in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless. The Soul that regardeth itself as filled and encompassed with the divine Presence, will earnestly aspire to be formed into the divine Likeness, and will follow after the Things that are just, and pure, and lovely,
and

DISCOURSE VII. 155

and virtuous, and praise-worthy. Servants are usually most diligent under the Master's Eye. Though they might otherwise be disposed to loiter and be idle, they will apply themselves to their Work when he is present and looketh on. And surely then, a Sense of God's being always most immediately present with us, should make us earnest and diligent in working the Works of him that hath called us, that we may glorify him on Earth, and finish the Work which he hath given us to do. This, duly impressed upon the Mind, would cause us to shake off that Listlessness and Indifferency that hangeth about us. We should not then be *slothful in Business*, but *servent in Spirit, serving the Lord*, doing what we do in our several Stations and Relations as unto the Lord, and not unto Men. Shall we not be *stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord*, when we consider that we are continually in his Presence who will shortly call us to a strict Account, whose Approbation is of infinitely greater Importance to us than that of a whole World, and who is capable of amply rewarding us, and will take Care that our *Labour* shall not be *in vain in the Lord?*

Lastly,

156 DISCOURSE VII.

Lastly, The Consideration of God's Immensity and Omnipresence is a solid Ground of Confidence and Consolation to all sincere upright Souls. Under all their Trials and Tribulations, and amidst all the Vicissitudes of this mutable Scene, it should support and comfort them to think that God is with them; that glorious Being is ever at Hand to strengthen and assist them. And wherever God is present, infinite Wisdom and Power, Righteousness and Goodness is present. No Consideration is better fitted to inspire a holy Fortitude, and raise the Mind above all slavish Fears. *I have set the Lord always before me, said the Psalmist, because he is at my right Hand, I shall not be moved.* Psal. xvi. 8. *The Lord is on my Side, I will not fear: What can Man do unto me?* Psal. cxviii. 6. *Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his Help; whose Hope is in the Lord his God, which made Heaven and Earth, the Sea, and all that therein is; which keepeth Truth for ever.* Psal. cxlvi. 5, 6. When from a lively Sense of God's continual Presence with us, we can say, *God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in Trouble;* we may then express our Confidence in those noble Strains, *Therefore will not we fear, though the Earth be removed, and though the Mountains be carried*

DISCOURSE VII. 157

carried into the midst of the Sea; though the Waters roar, and be troubled; though the Mountains shake with the Swelling thereof. Pfal. xlvi. 1, 2, 3. What an encouraging and animating Consideration is it, that the Eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth, to shew himself strong in the Behalf of them whose Heart is perfect towards him! 2 Chron. xvi. 9. If a good Man be loaded with unjust Calumnies and Reproaches by ignorant or malicious Men, he rejoiceth to think that God, who is ever present with him, knoweth his Innocence and Integrity, and will in due Time justify and recompense him according to his Righteousness, according to the Cleanness of his Hands in his Sight. Pfal. xviii. 24. If the Rage of persecuting Enemies should banish him from his Country, and from his dearest earthly Relatives, still it is his Comfort that they cannot banish him from God. Shut him up in the darkest, the most noisome Dungeon, or place him in the most lonely Solitude, in a howling Wilderness, remote from the Society of Men, yet God is present with him there. He is present to the good and upright, to those that love and serve him in Sincerity, not only with respect to his essential Presence in that common Sense
in

158 DISCOURSE VII.

in which he is present to all his Creatures, but he is present to them in a Way of special Grace and Favour. He is represented as dwelling in them as in his living Temples, which he preferreth before the most pompous material Edifices. *Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity, whose Name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy Place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble Spirit, to revive the Spirit of the humble, and to revive the Heart of the contrite ones.* Isa. lvii. 15. The Apostle speaking of true Christians, saith, *Ye are the Temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my People.* 2 Cor. vi. 16. And again, *Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* 1 Cor. iii. 16. And how happy must those be, who have the Almighty dwelling in and with them, replenishing them with the Beams and Influences of his Grace and Love! This they are not fully sensible of in this present imperfect State: but in the heavenly World God shall in the most glorious Sense be for ever all in all. His beatific Presence shall be in their Souls a most intimate Source of endless Bliss, and Satisfaction, and Joy. There shall

DISCOURSE VII. 159

shall then be Nothing to separate between him and them, or to hinder them from receiving the most abundant Communications of his Goodness and Glory. They shall be for ever with the Lord, as it were swallowed up in the Fullness of infinite Perfections, and happy in the Enjoyment of his Love to all Eternity.



On the Omniscience of God.

DISCOURSE VIII.

PSALM CXXXIX. I.—6.

O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my Down-sitting and mine Up-rising, thou understandest my Thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my Path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my Ways. For there is not a Word in my Tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine Hand upon me. Such Knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

THERE is scarce any Thing of greater Importance in Religion, than to maintain an habitual Sense of God's continual Presence with us, and In-
[VOL. I.] M spection

162 DISCOURSE VIII.

spection over us. If we firmly believed, and seriously considered, that we and all our Ways, our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, are ever open to the View of a pure and holy Deity, our supreme Lord, and final Judge, by whom our everlasting State is to be determined; surely this must needs have a mighty Influence to engage us to exercise a constant Care over both our inward Frame, and our outward Practice. Nothing could possibly furnish a more effectual Preservative against Sin, or a more powerful Motive to the Performance of our Duty. And there is no Part of the sacred Writings that is fuller and more express to this Purpose, and that exhibiteth a nobler Description of God's Omniscience and Omnipresence, than this Psalm, which for the Dignity and Sublimity of the Sentiments, the Variety and Energy of the Expressions, and the Strength and Beauty of the Figures, cannot be sufficiently admired.

In the Words which I have chosen for the Subject of this Discourse, the Psalmist plainly signifieth both the Extent and the Exactness of the divine Knowledge. The Extent of the divine Knowledge is here signified. He representeth God as knowing his *Down-sitting, his Up-rising, his Path,*
his

DISCOURSE VIII. 163

his lying down, his Words, his Thoughts, and all his Ways. The Exactness of the divine Knowledge is also signified. *O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou hast searched me:* Not as if God needed to make a laborious Search, a diligent Scrutiny in order to discover our Ways; but it is a figurative Expression, to signify that God knoweth them fully and perfectly, as we know those Things best, which we search into with the utmost Diligence and Care. So again, Verse 3. *Thou compassest my Path,* thou observest it on every Side; or it might be rendered as it is in the Margin, “*thou winnowest my Path,*” thou sifest it narrowly. And with regard to every Word that proceeded out of his Lips, the Psalmist saith, *Thou knowest it altogether;* not imperfectly or in Part only, but absolutely and with the greatest Exactness. So that the general Design of this Passage is to make a Declaration of this most important Truth, which deserves to be deeply and continually impressed upon our Minds;

That God exerciseth a constant Inspection over us, and hath a perfect Knowledge of every Man's Ways, his inward Frame and Temper, and his outward Conduct and Behaviour.

This is a Truth frequently inculcated in the Holy Scriptures, in strong and significant

164 DISCOURSE VIII.

cant Expressions. We are often told that God knoweth all Things. *There is not any Creature, saith the sacred Writer to the Hebrews, that is not manifest in his Sight; but all Things are naked and opened unto the Eyes of him with whom we have to do.* Heb. iv. 13. And if all Things, then surely all the Ways of the Children of Men. Accordingly the Wise-man expressly saith, that *the Ways of a Man are before the Eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his Goings.* Prov. v. 21. To the same Purpose *Job* expresseth himself, *Doth not he see my Ways, and count all my Steps?* Job xxxi. 4. See also *Job* xxxi. 21. And these Declarations of Holy Writ are perfectly agreeable to the Light of impartial Reason. It is necessarily included in the Idea of God, that he is the absolutely perfect Being. Whatsoever therefore is really a Perfection, and the Absence of which must argue an Imperfection and Defect, ought to be ascribed to him. And consequently since it cannot be denied that Knowledge is a Perfection, and that the more exact the Knowledge is, and the greater the Extent of it, the more perfect it is; it necessarily followeth, that God is a Being of the most exact and comprehensive Knowledge. His Understanding is infinite and unlimited; and therefore

DISCOURSE VIII. 165

therefore he is omniscient and knoweth all Things: and consequently must know all Mankind, and all their Words and Actions, and even their most secret Thoughts. The same Thing may be also argued from his Immensity and Omnipresence. He filleth Heaven and Earth, and is most intimately and essentially present to every Part of this vast Universe, upholding and maintaining all the Orders of Beings in the Use of the several Powers and Faculties which he hath given them. *He is not far from any of us, seeing it is in him that we live, and move, and have our Being.* Acts xvii. 27, 28. And therefore he must needs know all his Creatures, to each of whom he is continually and most intimately present. Hence God's Omniscience and Omnipresence are jointly celebrated in this Psalm, as having a close and inseparable Connection. That God knoweth all Men and their Ways, and exerciseth a continual Inspection over them, farther appears from this Consideration, that otherwise he could not be properly qualified to govern and judge the World, to reward the righteous and punish the wicked. He might be imposed upon with external Shews and specious Appearances; he might possibly be deceived in his Judgment of Persons and Things,

166 DISCOURSE VIII.

might let good Actions and Dispositions go unrewarded, and evil ones unpunished. So that to say that God is not acquainted with all our Ways, would be in effect to deny his Providence and Government of the World; to all this may be added the general Consent of Mankind in all Ages. That all Mankind and their Actions, and even the most secret Intentions and Dispositions of their Hearts, are known to the Deity, seems to be plainly supposed in the Prayers that have been offered, the Vows that have been made, and the solemn Appeals to Heaven, and Oath for Confirmation, and for putting an End to Strife, which have been usual in almost all Nations. Hence also that Dread of the divine Judgment even for the most secret Crimes, which is so natural to the human Mind, those inward conscious Terrors which have pursued the wicked, even those of them who needed not to fear Punishment from Men, and which they have not been able entirely to divest themselves of, though they have striven hard to do it. All this shews, that there is an inward Sense of this Truth deeply rooted in the human Heart, and which gives a kind of natural Testimony to it.

This may serve in general for evincing the Truth of the Observation.

But

DISCOURSE VIII. 167

But it may be useful to take a more distinct View of the Knowledge of God as extending to all the Actions we perform, to every Word that proceeds out of our Lips, and even to the most secret Thoughts of our Hearts.

1st, God is perfectly acquainted with all the Actions we perform. This is plainly signified by the Psalmist here, when he saith, *Thou compassesst my Path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my Ways.* Where-ever we are, and whatsoever we do, still we are surrounded with the divine Presence. He marketh all our Steps, and every Part of our Conduct. His all-seeing Eye accompanieth us on our Beds by Night, and in our Walks by Day, and followeth us to our most secret Retirements. He observeth not only those Actions of ours, which are of a more public Nature, done openly in the View of the World, but even those which we take the greatest Care to conceal from the View of our Fellow-creatures. He seeth as well what is done in the most retired Cave or Cell, as what is done in the Gates and in the chief Place of Concourse. Not the least of our good Actions escapeth his Notice. Our private Alms when our left Hand scarce knoweth what our right Hand doeth, and our most secret Acts of Piety

168 DISCOURSE VIII.

and Devotion, are observed by our heavenly Father, who seeth in Secret. Thus the Angel told *Cornelius*, *Thy Prayers and thine Alms are come up for a Memorial before God.* Acts x. 4. Every Thing we do, whereby we are any way serviceable to his Kingdom and Interests, or contribute to promote the real Welfare and Happiness of our Fellow-creatures, and Fellow-christians, comes under the divine Inspection, and shall be graciously rewarded. On the other Hand, all our evil Actions are also perfectly known to him in every Circumstance. He observeth every Thing that is done against the Honour of his Name, and the Interests of his Religion in the World; all Acts, not only of open Injustice, Cruelty, and Violence, but of artful Fraud and Cunning, which are often managed in such a Manner as to escape Punishment from human Judicatures. The proud he knoweth afar off, and seeth when the wicked lurk privily for the innocent without a Cause. The Excesses of Riot, Intemperance and Debauchery, which Men at any Times indulge, do also come under his Notice. He beholdeth the secret Haunts of the impure Fornicator and Adulterer. When they think they are shrouded and befriended by the Obscurity of the Night, his all-seeing Eye penetrateth the dark Disguise.

DISCOURSE VIII. 169

guise. *There is no Darknefs, nor Shadow of Death, where the Workers of Iniquity may hide themselves.* Job xxxiv. 22. For as the Pfalmist here elegantly expreffeth it, *If I fay surely the Darknefs shall cover me, even the Night shall be light about me. Yea, the Darknefs hideth not from thee; but the Night shineth as the Day: The Darknefs and the Light are both alike to thee.* Ver. 11. 12. Again, not only our good and evil Actions, but even those of an indifferent Nature, are not hidden from him. His Eye is upon us in our going out and in our coming in, whether we be at home or abroad, employed in Business, or in taking our Diversion. In a Word, he carefully observeth what Use we make of our Time, and of the Abilities and Talents he hath given us, whether we lay ourselves out in endeavouring to promote his Glory in the World, and to do Good to Mankind as far as we have Opportunity, or whether we trifle away our precious Time, and spend it to no valuable Purpose at all, or to a bad one; how we conduct ourselves in our several relative Capacities, as Magistrates or Subjects, as Husbands or Wives, as Parents or Children, as Masters or Servants; how we behave with regard to the Duties and Offices of our several Callings, according to the Rank we bear in the

Community,

170 DISCOURSE VIII.

Community, and the Variety of our outward Condition and Circumstances, whether we be rich or poor, in Prosperity or Adversity, in a higher or lower Station. On all these Accounts it may be justly said, that *the Lord is a God of Knowledge, and by him Actions are weighed.* 1 Sam. ii. 3.

2dly, God hath a most exact and certain Knowledge, not only of all the Actions we perform, but of all the Words we speak. *There is not a Word in my Tongue,* saith the Psalmist here, *but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.* Words are often disregarded, many of them pass away as the Wind, and are remembered no more. But none of them can escape the Notice of an omniscient Deity. He observeth how we employ the Faculty of Speech, which he hath given us, and whereby we are eminently distinguished from the inferior Animals: Whether we be careful to speak the Truth in Love, and whether our Speech be seasoned with Salt, ministring Grace unto the Hearers. He taketh a distinct Notice of all the Words we utter, with an Intention to promote the Glory of God, and the Good of our Fellow-creatures, and to serve the Cause of Truth, Piety, and Righteousness, in the World. He observeth when we endeavour

DISCOURSE VIII. 171

deavour to honour him with our Lips, when we employ our Tongues in speaking well of his great and excellent Name, of his holy Word and Laws, and in recommending Religion and Virtue, or in promoting useful Knowledge, in instructing the ignorant, in giving good Counsel and Advice to those that need it, in comforting those that mourn, and speaking a Word in Season to him that is weary. None of these Things pass unnoticed by our sovereign Lord and Judge. Remarkable to this Purpose is that Passage, *Mal. iii. 16.* where we are told, that *they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his Name.* He heard what they said in their private Conversations, for comforting and admonishing one another, for provoking one another to Love and to good Works, and for strengthening each others Faith, and Patience, and Hope. And so pleasing was this to the divine Majesty, that it is there added, *They shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the Day when I make up my Jewels, and I will spare them as a Man spareth his own Son that serveth him.* Verse 17. On the other Hand, all the evil Words Men utter are also

172 DISCOURSE VIII.

also perfectly known to God. He observeth whatsoever we speak unadvisedly with our Lips, all our angry, wrathful, and passionate Expressions, but especially all our false and lying Words; for *lying Lips are an Abomination to the Lord.* Prov. xii. 22. and all our uncharitable and censorious Speeches against the Name and Reputation of our Neighbour. He seeth when the wicked shoot their Arrows privily against the upright, even bitter Words. He marketh all their cruel and injurious Expressions, whereby they add Affliction to the wicked, and speak to the Grief of those whom God hath wounded; all the Reproaches they cast on his Ways, and on his faithful Servants; all their impious Scoffs, whereby they endeavour to turn Things sacred into Ridicule. The Words they utter over their Cups, and in their drunken Excesses; all their horrid Oaths and Execrations, whereby they profane the holy and venerable Name of God; all their foolish Talking and Jestings, and their impure and obscene Expressions not fit to be named among Men and Christians. To all these Things God is now a Witness, and shall remember them at the great Day. Our Saviour assureth us, that *every idle Word that Men shall speak, they shall give an Account thereof in*
the

DISCOURSE VIII. 173

the Day of Judgment. Matth. xii. 36. *Behold, the Lord cometh with Ten Thousands of his Saints, not only to convince the ungodly of all their ungodly Deeds which they have ungodly committed, but of all their hard Speeches which ungodly Sinners have spoken against him.* Jude 14, 15.

3dly, God hath a perfect Knowledge of all the Thoughts of our Hearts, the most secret Affections and Dispositions of our Souls. He not only observeth our outward Actions and Words, which are in many Cases obvious to the View and Notice of our Fellow-creatures, but the hidden Springs and Principles from which they flow. For *the Lord weigheth the Spirits*, as the Wise-man expresth it. Prov. xvi. 2. This is frequently mentioned as his peculiar Character, whereby he is eminently distinguished from all other Beings whatsoever. *Thou, even thou only knowest the Hearts of all the Children of Men*, saith Solomon in his noble Address to God. 1 Kings viii. 39. God having declared by the Prophet, *the Heart is deceitful above all Things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?* immediately adds, *I the Lord search the Hearts, I try the Reins, even to give every Man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings.* Jer. xvii. 9, 10. He penetrateth to
the

174 DISCOURSE VIII.

the inmost Recesses of the Soul, and seeth the secret Guile that is lurking there. It may deceive others, but it cannot deceive him. *For the Lord seeth not as Man seeth; for Man looketh on the outward Appearance, but the Lord looketh on the Heart.*

1 Sam. xvi. 7. Thousands of Ideas are continually rising up in our Minds, and passing and repassing there in a busy Throng, and many of them seem to die as soon as formed, but not one of them is concealed from God. *No Thought can be withholden from thee,* saith Job, Chap. xlii. 2. Or, as the Psalmist here expresseth it, *Thou understandest my Thoughts afar off.* He seeth the first Motions, the Beginning, Progress, and End of every Thought: He knoweth whether our seemingly good Words and Deeds, which have a plausible Appearance in the Eyes of Men, do indeed proceed from internal virtuous Dispositions, from a real Love to God and Goodness, and from a pure and upright Intention; or whether they proceed from Pride and Vain-glory, and from selfish, wordly Principles and Views. He taketh Notice of the secret pious Resolutions formed in the Heart of a good Man, even where he hath not an Opportunity of putting them in Practice; the inward Exercises of Love to God, and Faith in our Lord
Jesus

DISCOURSE VIII. 175

Jesus Christ, the fervent Desires and Pantings of his Soul after Grace and Holiness, and those spiritual Groanings which cannot be uttered; the Workings of godly Sorrow for Sin, the ingenuous Meltings of a contrite Heart, the inward Motion of kind and benevolent Affections, and the Propensities of a liberal Disposition, where the outward Ability is wanting. On the contrary, he seeth whatsoever is amiss in the Temper of our Minds, the secret Risings of Pride and Vanity, whereby we are carried to think highly of ourselves above what we ought to think, and of bitter envying at the Abilities, Reputation, and Prosperity of others. He perfectly knoweth all the darling Iniquities and corrupt Inclinations which we cherish in our Bosoms, the hidden Motions of Concupiscence, those unlawful Desires and Covetings which never proceed into Action. Nor can we conceal from him the inward Workings of Unbelief and Distrust, the secret Repinings and Discontents, and the hard Thoughts of his Providence which are apt to arise in our Hearts. He observeth how our Affections are disposed, whether they are fixed prevailingly on this present World, or are raised to the Things which are above. In a Word, he is perfectly acquainted with the most secret Devices of wicked

176 DISCOURSE VIII.

wicked Men, when the inward Thought of every one of them and the Heart is deep. He seeth all the evil Designs they form, their Falshood and Guile, their deliberate Purposes of Revenge, and that Malice and Hatred that lies rankling in their Bosoms, though perhaps covered over with the specious Disguise and Appearance of Friendship. He knoweth all the Lusts that have Dominion over them, and that Fountain of Corruption and Impurity that is in their Hearts, and which spreadeth Defilement through their whole Temper and Practice.

Thus have I given a brief Representation of the divine Omniscience, especially as extending to the whole human Race, and to all their Thoughts, Words, and Actions. And should not this fill us with adoring Thoughts of God, and with a holy Fear of his divine Majesty? Should not we prostrate ourselves with an awful Veneration at his Footstool, crying out with the devout Psalmist, *Such Knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it?* From what hath been said, we may see the great Folly of Hypocrisy, and how vain it is to think to deceive the Supreme Being with external Forms and Shews. Shall we suffer ourselves to be drawn to sin, under Pretence of committing

DISCOURSE VIII. 177

ting it with Secrecy, when we consider that the all-observant Eye of God is ever upon us? How careful should we be to approve ourselves to him in our whole Course, and to think, speak, and act, as in his Presence, who is now our all-seeing Witness, and shall shortly be our impartial Judge! These and other Reflections which might be mentioned, naturally arise upon this Subject; but as I have not Time to insist upon them at present, I shall reserve the distinct Consideration of them to another Opportunity.





On the Omniscience of God.

DISCOURSE IX.

PSAL. CXXXIX. 1.—6.

O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my Down-sitting and mine Up-rising, thou understandest my Thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my Path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my Ways. For there is not a Word in my Tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine Hand upon me. Such Knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

THESE Words have been already proposed to your Consideration, and they present this most important Truth to our Minds;

N a

That

180 DISCOURSE IX.

That God exerciseth a constant Inspection over us, and hath a most exact and perfect Knowledge of every Man's Ways, of his inward Frame and Temper, and of his outward Practice and Behaviour.

I observed to you, that not only is this clearly asserted in the Holy Scriptures, but that the Light of unprejudiced Reason, if duly attended to, bears Witness to this Truth. That God knoweth all Things, and consequently knoweth all the Ways of the Children of Men, may be justly concluded from the infinite Perfection of his Nature; particularly from his Immenfity and Omniprefence; as also from his Government of the World and of Mankind, which could not be rightly executed without it. Accordingly, it was shewn that there hath been a general Acknowledgment of this Truth among all that have believed a God and a Providence. It is supposed, in the Prayers, the Vows, the solemn Appeals to Heaven, which have been usual in all Ages and Nations; and a secret Sense of this lies at the Foundation of those Terrors of Conscience, that haunt the Minds of Sinners, and which even the most profligate can scarce entirely divest themselves of.

Having offered these Things in general, I proceeded to a more distinct View of the
divine

DISCOURSE IX. 181

divine Knowledge as extending to all the Actions we perform, every Word that proceedeth out of our Lips, and the most secret Thoughts and Intents of the Heart. Many are the useful Reflections which naturally arise upon this Subject, and which I shall now distinctly consider.

And 1st, How should this fill us with the most admiring, awful Thoughts of the Deity, and cause us to adore and worship him with the profoundest Veneration! For what a wonderful Being must he needs be, of what vast Knowledge and Comprehension, who knoweth every Thing that is said, thought, or done, by the many Millions of Men, who are now on the Face of the whole Earth, or who have lived upon it from the Beginning of the Creation to this Day. Yea, and all the Thoughts, Words, and Actions, of all the numberless Orders of Beings throughout this vast Universe! He takes them in all at once, without Distraction and Confusion, at one entire, perfect, all-comprehending View, and knoweth every one of them as fully and distinctly, as if he had only that one particular Thing to mind. So that there is no Danger of his forgetting or overlooking any Thing amidst the Hurry and Variety of Objects; yea, what is still more astonishing, he knoweth them all from the

182 DISCOURSE IX.

Beginning, and even from everlasting. He foreseeth our Thoughts before we conceive them, our Words before we speak them, and our Actions before they are put in Execution. Accordingly we find in Scripture many clear and express Predictions, delivered by the Inspiration of his Spirit, foretelling the most contingent Events, and which seemed to depend on the free Determination of voluntary Agents, and that a long Time before they happened. The Manner of this divine Knowledge exceedeth our Comprehensions. It is so far beyond all the Conceptions we can form, that we may justly say with the Psalmist, *Such Knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it.* In this as well as other Respects we may well cry out, *Who can by searching find out God? Who can find out the Almighty to Perfection?* What a proper Object doth he appear to be in this View of the inward Worship and Homage of all reasonable Beings! Let us therefore prostrate ourselves at his Footstool with Reverence and godly Fear, adoring and serving him as the incomprehensible Jehovah, whose Greatness is unsearchable, and whose Understanding is infinite.

2dly, Since God hath a perfect Knowledge of all our Ways, of our in-
ward

DISCOURSE IX. 183

ward Frame and outward Conduct, and now exerciseth a constant Inspection over us, we may reasonably conclude, that he will hereafter call us to a strict and impartial Account, and will judge us accordingly. Hence these Things are joined together in the sacred Writings, God's knowing our Ways, and judging us for them. Thus *Jer. xvii. 10. I the Lord search the Hearts, I try the Reins, even to give every Man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings.* And again, *Jer. xxxii. 19. Thine Eyes are upon all the Ways of the Sons of Men, to give every one according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings.* It is evident, that this is not done in this present Life, which appears not to have been designed to be a State of final Judgment and Retributions. We must therefore look for it in a future State. And accordingly we are assured, that God *hath appointed a Day in the which he will judge the World in Righteousness. Acts xvii. 31.* And that *then every one of us shall give an Account of himself to God. Rom. xiv. 12.* And what is the most exact and solemn Trial before any human Judicature, compared with that which shall pass upon us at the Tribunal of God in the great Day? It is impossible that he should commit any Error or Mistake in Judgment, as the best

184 DISCOURSE IX.

and most sagacious of human Judges often do, for want of knowing all the Circumstances of Actions, or the Principles from which they proceed. They are frequently at a loss because they cannot get sufficient Information; but this can never be supposed concerning the omniscient Being, who can never be deceived, either in Matter of Fact or Matter of Right. And as it will be impossible to deceive our Judge, it will be equally impossible to bribe or pervert him from a strict Regard to Truth, and Righteousness, and Equity. There is no Impurity with the Lord our God, nor Respect of Persons, nor taking of Gifts; but every Thing shall be weighed in a fair and equal Ballance; and every man shall receive according to the Things done in the Body, whether good or evil. 2 Cor. v. 10. God's Omniscience will be instead of a thousand Witnesses, and he will bring their Ways to their own Remembrance, and will cause their own Consciences to bear Witness against them. That is an awful Passage which we have, *Psal. l. 21, 22.* where God is introduced as declaring to those who, though they call themselves his People, yet indulge themselves in a presumptuous Course of Wickedness: *These Things hast thou done, and I kept Silence, thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will reprove thee, and*
set

DISCOURSE IX. 185

set them in Order before thine Eyes. The Wise-man representeth it as a certain Truth, and which ought to have a mighty Influence upon us, that *God will bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* Eccles. xii. 14. that is, not only our outward Actions, but even our idle Words, as our Saviour assureth us, and the secret Thoughts and Dispositions of our Hearts. And the Issues of that Judgment, according to the Scripture-account of it, will be the most important that can possibly be conceived, eternal Happiness, or eternal Misery; and different Degrees of both, according to the different Degrees of their good or evil Actions or Dispositions.

3dly, From what hath been said on this Subject, we may see the great Folly and Danger of Hypocrisy. The Hypocrite is a Person who endeavoureth to put on a fair Appearance in the Eye of the World, but at the same Time is destitute of real Goodness, and is under the Power of corrupt and inordinate Lusts, and evil Dispositions of Heart, which he freely indulgeth in Secret, and is only solicitous to conceal his Wickedness from the View of his Fellow-creatures. But this is the most absurd and foolish Conduct in the World. What will it profit thee if thou

2

shouldest

186 DISCOURSE IX.

shouldest be able to conceal thy Hypocrisy and Guile from every Creature, when at the same Time God knoweth it, who hath the Issues of Life and Death in his Hands, and by whom thy everlasting State is to be determined? It is comparatively a small Thing to be judged of Man's Judgment. Our All for Eternity dependeth upon the Judgment which God will pass concerning us; and therefore to have God privy to our Wickedness, is of infinitely greater Moment and Concern to us, than to have it known to all the Angels in Heaven, or Men upon Earth. Though a Man should have behaved so artfully as to obtain the Applause of his Fellow-mortals, and to be universally admired when living, and inrolled in the Records of Fame when dead; will this be of any Advantage to him, if at the same Time God, the only true Judge of Worth, abhors and condemns him? What a foolish Thing is it, therefore, to endeavour to deceive frail Creatures like ourselves with specious Appearances, and to value ourselves upon their good Opinion, when we cannot deceive God, on whom it dependeth to make us happy or miserable for ever! *Man looketh at the outward Appearance, and is taken with goodly Form and Shew, but the Lord looketh on the Heart.*

1 Sam. xvi. 7. And then let it farther
be

DISCOURSE IX. 187

be considered, to shew the Folly of Hypocrisy, that as God now perfectly knoweth their most secret Wickedness, so the Time is coming when he will so order it, that the whole World shall know it too. In the great Day of Judgment the Secrets of all Hearts shall be revealed; the hidden Depths of Hypocrisy, the intricate Windings of a deceitful Heart, which no Creature could distinctly trace, shall then be laid open to Angels and Men. Many that here made a splendid Shew, shall then be stripped of every false Disguise. Those secret Acts of Fraud, Injustice, or Impurity, which they industriously concealed from the View of the World, shall then be openly displayed, to their inexpressible Shame and Confusion, and brought forth as on an ample Theatre, before that universal august Assembly; and they shall be doomed to a very aggravated Punishment. For our Saviour, when describing the Punishment of the wicked Servant, tells us, that his Lord would *appoint him his Portion with the Hypocrites; there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth.* Matt. xxiv. 51. intimating, that the Punishment of the Hypocrites shall be peculiarly grievous.

4thly, Since God is perfectly acquainted with all our Ways, and even
our

188 DISCOURSE IX.

our most secret Thoughts, we should make Use of this Consideration as an effectual Preservative against Temptations to Sin. Scarce any Thing could have a greater Influence to keep us from those Sins to which we are most inclined and exposed, than a strong habitual Sense of God's continual Presence with us, and Inspection over us. Even they whose Lusts are most violent can, in many Instances, controul and govern their importunate Appetites and Passions in the Presence of their Fellow-creatures; and how much more powerful a Restraint would a Sense of God's all-seeing Eye be, if duly realized to the Mind! The Reason why so many freely indulge themselves in Wickedness, and in the Gratification of their vicious Appetite, is, because God is not in all their Thoughts. They do not reflect that the Eye of the Lord is upon their Ways, and he pondereth all their Goings. Hence it is given as the Character of wicked Men, that they *forget God*. Psal. 1. 22. The impure Fornicator and Adulterer can abstain from his lascivious Dalliances before a Person of known Virtue, especially if he be one of eminent Station and Dignity; and would he dare to give Scope to his lustful Inclinations, if he really and at that Time considered himself as in the Presence of a God

DISCOURSE IX. 189

God of infinite Purity, who hath declared that Whoremongers and Adulterers he will judge? The most unjust Person would not dare to commit an Act of Fraud and Injustice under the Eye and Cognizance of a wise and righteous Magistrate; and how much less would he do it, if he considered and believed that the supreme Lord of the Universe, who is the great Avenger of all Fraud and Falshood, observeth what he is doing even when he escapes the Notice of Men, and will call him to a severe Account! The profane Swearer and Curser can refrain his hellish Dialect in the Presence of Persons of Gravity and Authority, whom he knoweth it will offend, and whom he is afraid to disoblige; and would it not have a greater Effect upon him, seriously to reflect that the great Majesty of Heaven, whose holy and tremendous Name he thus dishonoureth, and who hath declared, that he *will not hold those guiltless that take his Name in vain*, heareth every Word and Oath he uttereth, and will remember them all against him to his Condemnation! In vain would *Satan* tempt us to do a base and wicked Thing, if we had this Thought deeply and strongly impressed upon our Hearts, that at that very Instant a holy Deity diligently marketh all our Steps, and every Part of our Conduct.

190 DISCOURSE IX.

Conduct. This would fortify our Minds, and keep us from being drawn aside to Sin by any Prospects of Pleasure or Gain, or by a Pretence of committing it with Secrecy. It was this preserved pious *Joseph* in Circumstances of great Temptation. There were many Things to engage his Compliance, the Charms of sensual Pleasure, the Hopes of advancing his worldly Interest on the one Hand, and the Fears of exposing himself to Ruin, and the bitterest Resentments, on the other. Add to this, that he had a favourable Opportunity of doing it with Secrecy; for when he was sollicitated, there was none of the Men of the House then within; but still he was sensible that God saw and observed, and this was instead of all other Considerations, and produced that noble Declaration, *How shall I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God!* Gen. xxxix. 7.—12. In like Manner, whenever we are tempted to sin, we should be ready to say in our Hearts, The Eye of God is now upon me, and shall I dare to disobey his Authority, and to break his Laws in his own Presence? Shall I thus affront him to his Face, and commit Treason against him, even when he stands by and observes? If I could find any Method to conceal what I am doing from his Notice, there might
be

DISCOURSE IX. 191

be some Pretence for complying with the Temptation; but that is impossible; for *whither shall I go from his Spirit, or whither shall I flee from his Presence?*

5thly, As the Consideration of God's continual Inspection over us, and perfect Knowledge of all our Ways, should be a powerful Preservative against Temptations to Sin, so it furnisheth the most effectual Motive and Encouragement to the Performance of our Duty. *I am God Almighty, or all-sufficient, (saith God to Abraham) walk before me, and be thou perfect;* intimating, that to walk as before the Lord, *i. e.* under a constant Sense of his Presence, is the best Method we can take to attain to a true spiritual Perfection, or to an eminent Degree of Holiness and Virtue. It is a common Observation, that the Eye of the Master hath a Tendency to make Servants diligent in their Work; and should it not have a mighty Influence to make us *stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord,* to consider that we are ever under the Eye and Inspection of our great Lord and Master, the sovereign Lord of Heaven and Earth, from whom we expect the glorious Reward of all our Services? This would be instead of a thousand Arguments, to engage us to a persevering Diligence in the Performance
of

192 DISCOURSE IX.

of the Duties he requireth of us, and in the Improvement of those Talents with which he hath intrusted us, in Opposition to all the Difficulties and Discouragements that now lie in our Way. For shall we be slothful, and loiter away our Time and Opportunities, when we know that the supreme universal Lord seeth and observeth what we are doing? Surely a Sense of this would have a happy Tendency to render us serious and circumspect in our Conduct, and to compose us to a becoming Decency and Gravity, in Opposition to a vain, light, frothy Temper and Carriage. It would make us candid, open, and sincere in our whole Deportment, and would give every Word and Promise the Sanction of an Oath, considering that God is Witness to all we speak. In how exemplary a Manner should we then behave in every Station and Relation, and how careful should we be in the Discharge of the Duties incumbent upon us as Husbands and Wives, as Parents and Children, as Masters and Servants, as Magistrates and Subjects, if we performed these relative Duties, as in the Sight of God, and as unto the Lord, and not unto Men ! This would make us careful that all our Actions proceed from right Principles, and be devoted to right
Ends,

DISCOURSE IX. 193

Ends, and be directed and regulated by a right Rule. We should then be equally careful in those Duties which are done in Secret, as in those that come under public Notice and Observation. Thus our Saviour encourageth and exhorteth us to a right Performance of the secret Acts of Piety and Charity from this Consideration, that our heavenly *Father which seeth in Secret*, will reward us openly. Matt. vi. 4. 6. A due Regard to a present Deity would cause us to keep our Hearts with all Diligence, to exercise a constant Care over the inward Frame and Temper of our Minds, and to endeavour to cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness, not only of the Flesh, but of the Spirit too, that we may approve ourselves to that most holy and omniscient Being, who searcheth the Hearts, and trieth the Reins of the Children of Men. In a Word, I know not any one Consideration of greater Importance than this, or which hath a more manifest Tendency to promote the Practice of universal Righteousness; and therefore it highly concerneth us to set the Lord always before us. Let our first Morning Thoughts be that God seeth us, and is perfectly acquainted with all our Ways, and let such Thoughts influence the Practice of the Day, and be car-

ried alway with us through our whole Department.

Sixthly, A due Reflection upon this Subject should produce in us the deepest Humility and Self-abasement before that pure and holy Deity, who hath the most exact and perfect Knowledge of all our Sins and Defects, and even of our most secret Faults. If all the Iniquities we have been ever guilty of should rise up at once to our View, what a confounding Sight would this be! And they are all ever obvious to the all-seeing Eye of God, who is to be our Judge. Not one evil Action we have ever committed, not one idle Word we have ever spoken, not one sinful Thought we have ever conceived, can escape his Notice. He knoweth those Sins that we ourselves did not observe, or which are gone out of our Remembrance. When we consider this, should it not mortify every Motion of Pride within us, and keep us from entertaining high Thoughts of ourselves, or being puffed up with the good Opinion, or the Applauses of our Fellow-creatures? Alas! what would become of us if God should enter into strict Judgment with us? We might be apt even to sink into Despondency, were it not for the glorious Discoveries of his rich Grace and Mercy that are made to us in the Gospel.

DISCOURSE IX. 195

pel. With what Thankfulness should we receive the joyful Tidings, that God hath sent his own Son into the World to save and to redeem us, and hath given him to be the Propitiation for the Sins of the World! that he hath appointed him to be our great Mediator and Advocate, through whom he is ready to pardon all our Iniquities upon our sincere Repentance, and graciously to accept our Persons and Services, and to admit us to the Privileges of his Children! and that notwithstanding our manifold Failures and Defects, he hath promised through *Jesus Christ*, to crown our sincere, though imperfect Obedience, with everlasting Life and Happiness.

Seventhly, As the Consideration of the perfect Knowledge God hath of us and all our Ways, should cause us to humble ourselves deeply before him; so, on the other hand, it should support and comfort us under the unjust Calumnies and Reproaches of a malignant World. It often happeneth that the best of Men are basely traduced and vilified, their sincere and unaffected Piety, their honest Zeal for God, and steady Adherence to the Cause and Interests of Religion, is branded as Hypocrisy, or Enthusiasm, as an obstinate Bigotry, or, at best, a needless Singularity and Preciseness; their most innocent

196 DISCOURSE IX.

Actions are misinterpreted, and attributed to wrong Motives, and their good Name, which is dearer than Life, blackened with the most undeserved Reproaches. But what a Satisfaction is it in such Cases to reflect, that God knoweth the Uprightness of their Intentions, and to him they can commit their Cause! Though they are sensible that they are chargeable with manifold Failures and Defects, yet if their Hearts upon an impartial Enquiry do not condemn them of allowed Hypocrisy, and presumptuous Sin and Disobedience, they may have a humble Confidence towards God, who knoweth their Integrity, even where Men are wilfully blind, and perversely ignorant. And the Time is coming, when their Innocence shall be published to the whole World, to Angels and Men. Then *shall he bring forth their Righteousness as the Light, and their Judgment as the Noon-day.* Psal. xxxvii. 6. How many that were once stigmatized with the odious Names of Heretics and Schismatics, and treated as if they were the Off-scouring of all Things, shall then appear to have been the excellent ones of the Earth, acknowledged openly by God himself, and arrayed in Robes of shining Innocence and Purity. *Job* comforteth himself with this under the unkind Accusations

DISCOURSE IX. 197

tions of his mistaken Friends, *Thou, Lord, saith he, knowest that I am not wicked.* Job x. 7. And again, Chap. xxiii. 10, 11. *God knoweth the Way that I take; my Feet have held his Steps, his Way have I kept, and not declined.*

To this may be added, that God is perfectly acquainted with all the Difficulties and Troubles of every Kind that we meet with in this State of Trial and Pilgrimage. And he is not an unconcerned Spectator, but is ready to grant us seasonable Assistance and Supports. He seeth all the Snares that lie in our Way, all the Temptations to which we are exposed, all our Fears and Conflicts, and the sore Trials we are exercised with; he knoweth what we stand in need of, and will graciously suit his Supplies to our Circumstances and Necessities. And to him, as our most compassionate heavenly Father, we may with humble Confidence apply for needful Succour and Assistance. And this is certainly a most encouraging Thought, and a never-failing Spring of Consolation to good Men.

Thus we may see what excellent Use may be made of the Consideration of God's Inspection over us, and the perfect Knowledge he hath of all our Ways, and how highly it concerneth us to maintain a constant Sense of it. And in order to this we

198 DISCOURSE IX.

should both meditate frequently on this important Truth, and should beg of God that he would impress it strongly upon our Minds.

Finally, Let us all join that solemn Address to God, with which the devout Psalmist concludes his Meditations on the divine Omnipresence and Omniscience in this 139th Psalm, *Search me, O God, and know my Heart; try me, and know my Thoughts: And see if there be any wicked Way in me, and lead me in the Way everlasting.*

On the Holiness of God.

DISCOURSE X.

HABAK. i. 13.

*Thou art of purer Eyes than to behold Evil,
and canst not look on Iniquity.*

THE heinous Nature and Demerit of Sin, and the righteous Displeasure of God against it, is a Subject that well deserves our most serious Thoughts. If a Sense of this were deeply impressed upon our Hearts, it would be an effectual Preservative against the Force of Temptation, and would have a great Influence to make us cautious and circumspect in our whole Behaviour. We should not then suffer our-

selves to be easily drawn aside by the Charms and Allurements of Sin, or to be imposed upon by its specious Appearances. It is not easy to find Words more strong and expressive to this Purpose, than those of the Prophet *Habakkuk*, when addressing himself solemnly to God, he saith, *Thou art of purer Eyes than to behold Evil, and canst not look on Iniquity.* These are Expressions of the utmost Detestation and Abhorrence. For we are apt to turn our Eyes from Objects that are very hateful and loathsome to us, and can scarce bear to look upon them. The Subject therefore which these Words offer to our Consideration, and which I shall insist upon in the following Discourse, is plainly this: That Sin is the Object of God's righteous Detestation and Abhorrence; it is very hateful and abominable in his Sight.

Before I proceed to demonstrate this, I shall offer something in general concerning the Nature of Sin. The Apostle *John* gives a brief, but just Description of it, *1 John iii. 4. Whosoever committeth Sin, transgresseth also the Law: for Sin is the Transgression of the Law.* As God is the great Author and absolute Lord, so he is the most wise Governor of the World; and accordingly hath given Laws to his reasonable Creatures for the Rule of their

Duty;

Duty; which Laws they are under the highest Obligations of Justice, Gratitude, and Interest, to obey. These Laws, which are perfectly agreeable to the Reasons and Relations of Things, may be said to be in some measure written in the Hearts and Consciences of Men, in as much as he hath implanted a moral Sense of Good and Evil, which carries them in the inward deliberate Judgment of their Minds to approve the one, and to condemn the other. But besides this, as Mankind are now in a very corrupt and degenerate State, and the moral Sense very much impaired and defaced by vicious Prejudices, and over-ruled by depraved Appetites and Passions, he hath been graciously pleased to cause his Laws to be clearly and expressly set before us in his holy Word, as contained in the Scriptures. Now therefore, when the reasonable Creature transgresseth any of the Laws of God, either by omitting to do what the divine Law requireth, or by committing what that Law forbiddeth, that Creature may be said to sin against God: And Sin considered in this View, as it is an Instance of Disconformity to the Law of God, is of inconceivable Malignity and Demerit. It is a breaking through the eternal Rules of Justice and Order, founded in the very
Nature

202 DISCOURSE X.

Nature and Fitness of Things. It is virtually an Attempt of the Creature to shake off its Dependency on the great Creator; it is an implicit Rejection of the rightful Authority of the great Lord of the Universe, and a Revolting from him, the chiefest Good. It is a virtual Impeachment of all God's illustrious moral Perfections, and casts the most unworthy Reflections on his Wisdom and Goodness, his Righteousness and Purity, as if he were not fit to govern the World, and made Laws that are either unjust in themselves, or at least not fit for reasonable Creatures to obey. Sin is a setting up lawless Appetite to be the Rule, and were it suffered to prevail without Control, would introduce universal Misery and Confusion, and destroy the Beauty and Harmony of the moral World.

This is a brief Account of the Nature of Sin, which appears upon this View of it to be the worst of Evils. And accordingly in the Text, and in many other Passages of Scripture, it is called Evil by way of Eminency, as if nothing else deserved to be called so. And indeed, properly speaking, all Evil is either Sin, or the Effects of it. It is called Iniquity, to signify that it is an utter perverting that which is just and right. It is often called Filthiness,
and

and is described in Scripture by whatever is odious and loathsome. But after all, there is nothing so bad as itself to express it by, and therefore when the Apostle would represent its heinous Malignity in the most emphatical Manner, he represents Sin as appearing to be *exceedingly sinful*. Rom. vii.

And now I proceed to shew, as I proposed, that Sin is very hateful in the Sight of God, and is the Object of his highest Detestation and Abhorrence.

This will appear if we consider, first, That the Perfection of the divine Nature, and the Reason of Things demonstrates, that Sin must be very hateful to God.

Secondly, This also appears from the express Declarations of his Word concerning it.

Thirdly, It appears from the Dispensations of his Providence, the Course of his Dealings towards his Creatures, especially towards Mankind.

First, The very Reason of Things, the Consideration of God's infinite Perfection shews, that Sin must needs be very hateful to him. The first and most obvious Notion that we have of God, is, that he is an absolutely perfect Being; and absolute Perfection is the most opposite Thing in the World to all moral Evil. He is a
Being

204 DISCOURSE X.

Being whose Wisdom and Understanding is infinite, and who knows all things as they really are, and therefore hath a perfect Discernment of the moral Differences of Things, of the Beauty and Excellency of Goodness, Holiness, and Virtue, and of the Evil and Deformity of Vice, and Sin, and Impurity. And agreeable to the pure Light of his infinite Understanding is the immutable Rectitude of his Will, whereby he is eternally carried to love and delight in whatsoever Things are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and virtuous, and lovely, and to hate whatsoever Things are contrary thereunto. He is an eternal Lover of Order, and therefore cannot but hate Sin, which is the most perverse and manifest Breach of the just Order and Harmony of Things. And then, if we consider him not only in the absolute Perfection and Rectitude of his own Nature, but in the Relations he bears to us, especially as he is our most just and wise Governor and Judge, so he cannot but hate Sin, because Sin is most directly opposed to his Authority and Government; it is a Violation of his own most righteous Law, and an Insult offered to his sacred Authority; it is the Insurrection of the Creature against the supreme universal Lord. And therefore the Regard
he

he hath to his own rightful Authority, and to the Majesty of his Laws, and the Justice he oweth to himself, obliges him to hate Sin, and makes it impossible for him to do otherwise. Lastly, if we consider him as a Lover of his Creatures, desirous of their Happiness, and of the Welfare of the Universe which he hath created; on this Account also he cannot but hate Sin, which tendeth to spread Misery and Ruin through the Creation of God, and is the Source of numberless Evils and Disorders. It tendeth to destroy the Health and Beauty of the reasonable Nature, to pervert the Order of its Faculties, and to render it incapable of true Blessedness: And therefore that most beneficent Being, that delighteth in the Good and Happiness of his Creatures, and who is the Guardian of universal Order, must needs have the utmost Abhorrence of Sin, and will do what is proper for him as a moral Governor to prevent it, by taking the fittest Methods to deter his reasonable Creatures from committing it.

This leads me to add, secondly, That he hath accordingly made the most express Declarations of his Hatred against Sin in his holy Word and Law. The great Creator and Lord of all hath been pleased to make a Discovery of his own Nature and
Will

206 DISCOURSE X.

Will to Mankind, not only by his wonderful Works, but by the Revelation of his Word, and in that Revelation he hath represented himself to us as a God of spotless Purity, and impartial Justice and Righteousness. We are there assured, that he is *glorious in Holiness*; that he is *not a God that hath Pleasure in Wickedness, neither shall Evil dwell with him*: *The foolish, that is, the wicked and obstinately disobedient, shall not stand in his Sight*; he hateth *all Workers of Iniquity*. P^sal. v. 4, 5. Sin is said to be the *abominable thing which he hateth*. Jer. xliv. 4. The most strong and ardent Expressions are purposely made use of in the sacred Writings, such as those of Wrath, Vengeance, Fury, the more emphatically to represent God's righteous Displeasure against Sin, and Resolution to punish it. The Wrath of God is there revealed from Heaven against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men. The most awful Threatenings are denounced in the divine Law against obstinate, presumptuous Transgressors. We are told that *Tribulation and Anguish shall be to every Soul of Man that doeth Evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile*. God hath established an unalterable Connection between Sin and Death. It is declared that *the Soul that sinneth shall die*. Ezek. xviii. 20.

and

and that *the Wages of Sin is Death*. Rom. vi. 23. And this Death, which is the just Wages of Sin, includes not merely temporal Death, which consisteth in the Separation of the Soul from the Body, but Death eternal, which is the Separation of the Soul from God's blissful Presence. And how was it possible for God to make fuller Declarations of his Displeasure and Hatred against Sin, than he hath done in his Word and Law?

And then add to all this, thirdly, That God's Hatred against Sin doth also evidently appear in the Dispensations of his Providence, and in the Course of his Dealings towards his Creatures, especially towards Mankind. Indeed God's Dealings with the Angels that sinned, exhibit a very terrible Display of his irreconcilable Displeasure against Sin. The Angels were the noblest Part of the intellectual Creation, the eldest Productions of almighty Power, endued with the most sublime and excellent Faculties, and therefore undoubtedly very dear to the glorious and beneficent Being that created them. Accordingly they had their original Residence in Heaven. But yet, when a Number of them sinned, God immediately cast them from his Favour and glorious Presence. We are told that he *spared not the Angels that*

that sinned, but cast them down to Hell, and delivered them into Chains of Darknes, to be reserved unto Judgment. 2 Pet. ii. 4. This is their present unhappy State. They are groaning under the Pressures of divine Wrath, and trembling at the Apprehensions of an infinitely greater Load of Vengeance that shall shortly overwhelm them. Not the least Glimmering of Hope for ever. As they were the first of God's Creatures that sinned, so they shall be the eternal awful Monuments of the Severity of his Justice.

But that which more nearly concerneth us, is to consider the Course of the divine Dispensations towards Mankind, in which a considering Mind may observe God's Detestation against Sin every where manifesting itself.

Man was at first made upright, after the amiable Image of God. He seemed to be the special Darling and Favourite of Heaven. He was constituted Lord of this lower World, which was fitted up as a beautiful Palace for his Reception and Entertainment; and as a Mark of God's special Favour, he was placed in a Paradise of Delights, and there admitted to happy Converses with his Maker. But no sooner had this favourite Creature sinned, than he was immediately driven out of Paradise.

A flaming

A flaming Sword was set to guard the Entrance, and hinder his tasting of the Tree of Life. A Train of dismal Woes succeeded, and rushed in at once like a Torrent upon the human Nature. Numberless are the Evils and Calamities to which Mankind are now obnoxious, all which exhibit an awful Demonstration of God's just Displeasure against Sin. These Calamities are either such as happen to particular Persons, or to larger collective Bodies.

As to the Calamities of particular Persons, they are so many and various, that they cannot be distinctly enumerated. *Man is born unto Trouble, as the Sparks fly upward.* Job v. 7. *Man that is born of a Woman is but of few Days, but those few Days are full of Trouble.* Job xiv. 1. In his Body he carries the Seeds of a thousand Distempers. How often is Life rendered miserable through the Languishings of a sickly Constitution, or through violent Paroxysms of Pain so severe that it requires an uncommon Degree of Patience to bear up under them! All these may be justly regarded as the Effects of Sin. Some indeed are particularly so, as they are immediately brought upon Men by their Vices; and with regard to all of them in general it may be said, that it is Sin that first broke the beautiful and health-

210 DISCOURSE X.

ful Crasis of the human Body, and subjected it, through the just Judgment of God, to numberless Disorders, and at length will bring it to the Grave, and there lay it in Dust and Rottenness, a Prey to vile Worms. But still more deplorable are the Evils and Miseries to which Sin hath subjected the human Soul. All the Anxieties and Disquietudes, the Terrors and Agonies, and racking Anguish of Mind, which any of the Children of Men have experienced, have been properly and originally owing to Sin, as the procuring Cause. It tends to produce inward Shame, and Dissatisfaction, and Remorse. Upon the whole, it is evident to all careful Observers, that in many Cases the Sins of particular Persons have, through the wise and just Appointment of God, their proper Punishments attending them even in this present State; and that by indulging themselves in Vice and Wickedness, Men often fill their own Lives with Bitterness, and bring great Disorders into their Affairs, Pains and Diseases on their Bodies, Disgrace upon their Names, and Horror into their Consciences. And even with regard to good Men themselves, as they still carry the Remains of Sin and Corruption on them here on Earth, so they are assaulted by a Variety of afflictive Evils. Thus it hath pleased

DISCOURSE X. 211

pleas'd God to order it, to shew that he hates Sin wherever he sees it; that he doth not spare or approve it even in his own Children, the Objects of his special Favour. It is his Will and unalterable Law, that whilst they are subject to Sin, they shall also be subject to Crosses and Sorrows, from which they shall never be absolutely freed, till they arrive at that State where they shall be perfectly purified from all Sin, and made completely and eternally holy.

But then, 2dly, If we proceed from the Calamities of particular Persons to those more extensive ones that involve whole Communities, here also God's righteous Vengeance against Sin is awfully displayed. It appears from the History of all Ages, that Vice and Wickedness, and Dissoluteness of Manners, has often brought Ruin on powerful and flourishing Empires. War, Famine, and Pestilence, may be particularly regarded as the Judgments of God upon a guilty People, whereby he chastises them for their Iniquities, and sweeps away thousands with the Besom of Destruction. Who can undertake to compute the Numbers that have fallen in War, when God commissions the Sword to rage, and to bring Terror, Confusion, and Devastation, upon whole Nations! How dreadful a Calamity

212 DISCOURSE X.

lamity is Famine, when the Heaven withholds its benign Influence, and the Earth its Fruits, and the fruitful Land is turned into Barrenness for the Wickedness of them that dwell therein! But there is nothing gives a more awful Idea of God's Vengeance against Sin than the Pestilence, which has been always regarded in all Nations, as in a more immediate Manner the Scourge of God; when Destruction wasteth at Noon-day, and ten thousands fall on the right Hand, and on the left, by a sudden and surprizing Stroke, which no human Power or Skill is able to resist or avoid. Such Calamities as these have in every Age been ravaging one Part of the Earth or other. But of all the public Calamities by which God hath at any Time declared to the World in an alarming Manner his just Displeasure against Sin, the most dreadful is the universal Deluge. When the Earth was filled with Violence, and all Flesh had corrupted their Way, God sent a Flood upon the World of the ungodly. Oh terrible Instance to shew how odious Sin is in the Sight of God! Millions of Men overwhelmed at once, the whole human Race swept off the Face of the Earth, eight Persons only excepted! Another extraordinary Instance to this purpose, is the Destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, and the neighbouring

DISCOURSE X. 213

ing impious Cities, by Fire and Brimstone from Heaven, whereby that Plain, which was before as the Garden of the Lord for Beauty and Fertility, is turned into a putrid noisome Lake, and it remains to all Ages a standing Monument of God's Displeasure against Sin. I might also mention on this Occasion, the final Destruction of *Jerusalem*, the Subversion of the *Jewish* Nation and Polity, which was attended with such peculiar Circumstances of divine Vengeance against that hardened and ungrateful People, as we can scarce think of without Horror.

Thus God's Detestation against Sin appears in the many Evils and Calamities to which Mankind are, through the righteous Judgment of God, obnoxious in their present sinful and degenerate State, whether of a more public Nature, ordinary or extraordinary.

Another Thing that deserves to be observed with regard to the Methods of God's Dealings towards Mankind is, that though he hath, in his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, provided a glorious Remedy for the Recovery of our fallen Natures, yet he hath taken Care to order it so, that even this Remedy is dispensed in such a Way, as demonstrates, in a most awful Manner, that Sin is the abominable Thing

214 DISCOURSE X.

which he hateth. For he would not pardon and restore guilty Mankind to Favour upon any less Consideration than the grievous Sufferings and Death of his own Son in their Nature and Stead. And when we consider the infinite Dignity of the Person that suffered for us on the one Hand, and, on the other, the amazing Extremity of the Sufferings he endured, which extorted from him strong Cries and Tears, and produced the bitterest Agonies of Soul; I say, when we consider these Things, that it pleased the Lord thus to bruise him, and put him to Grief, and then reflect that Sin, not his own Sin, (for he was perfectly holy and sinless) but our Sins were the procuring Cause of all these his dolorous Passions; that he was wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities; what an awful Demonstration does this exhibit of God's righteous Vengeance against Sin, and Resolution to punish it! If he could have been prevailed with to let Sin go absolutely unpunished, surely it would have been then when his own beloved Son interposed on the Behalf of us guilty Offenders; yet even then his Eye would not spare, neither would he have Pity, but by the Wounds he inflicted on his own incarnate Son, when appearing in our Stead, and

taking upon him the Punishment of our Offences, he declared to Heaven and Earth how infinitely odious Sin was in his Sight. Thus even at that very Time when God was making the most matchless and amiable Display of the Riches of his sovereign Grace and Mercy towards perishing Sinners, yet he took Care to do it in such a Manner as should illustriously manifest his righteous Abhorrence of Sin.

The last Thing I shall mention in the Method of God's Dealing towards Mankind, that demonstrates his Hatred against Sin, is that eternal Misery that shall be the Portion of obstinate impenitent Sinners in the World to come. He may, and often does, bear with the wicked in this State of Trial, and even pours forth many Benefits upon them in the Course of his Providence; but they that now reject his offered Mercy, and persist to the End in a presumptuous Course of Sin and Disobedience, shall receive no Benefit from the glorious Remedy which God hath provided; notwithstanding this, they shall, as our Saviour himself assureth us, go away into everlasting Punishment. This Punishment is described in Scripture by a Variety of the most significant and expressive Metaphors. We are told that they shall have their Portion in the Lake which burneth with

216 DISCOURSE X.

Fire and Brimstone; that the Smoke of their Torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; that they shall be cast into outer Darkness, or, as it is elsewhere expressed, Blackness of Darkness, where there shall be Weeping, and Wailing, and Gnashing of Teeth; that their Worm dieth not; and their Fire is not quenched; that they shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power. If the Horrors of the bottomless Pit, all those dismal Scenes of Misery and Vengeance were opened to our View; if we saw the Devils and damned Spirits tormented within and without with whatsoever can render Being miserable; if we heard their hideous Yellings, their Cries full of despairing Anguish, and beheld divine Vengeance eternally punishing them with repeated awful Strokes, surely we could no longer doubt whether Sin be abominable in the Sight of God. He who is the beneficent Parent of our Beings would never thus punish his Creatures, the Work of his own Hands; if there were not the highest Reason for it; if his Wisdom, Justice, and Purity, as he is the righteous Governor of the World, did not make it necessary for him to do so. It is with a kind Design, that Sinners may be deterred
from

DISCOURSE X. 217

from their wicked Courses, and thereby their Punishment and Misery may be prevented, that God hath caused these Threatenings to be denounced against them; but if they will not take these Warnings, but still continue obstinate and incorrigible, his own Justice and Faithfulness, and the Regard he hath to the Honour and Authority of his Government and Laws, and to the Preservation of the Peace and good Order of the moral World, will oblige him to execute those Threatenings.

I would now conclude with some brief Reflections upon this Subject.

And 1st, Is Sin the Object of God's righteous Abhorrence? then how great is the Guilt and Folly of those who delight in Sin, or who make a mock at it, or at least regard it as a slight and inconsiderable Evil! The Wise-man observes that *Fools make a mock at Sin.* Prov. xiv. 9. Many such Fools there are among us at this Day, that instead of being grieved and affected with a penitent Sorrow for Sin, do only sport themselves with it, and make it the Matter of their Mirth and Gaiety. Ah foolish Creatures! to take Pleasure in that which is so infinitely displeasing to a holy and glorious God! To make a mock at that which turned bright Angels into odious Fiends, and can turn a Paradise into
a Chaos,

218 DISCOURSE X.

a Chaos, and which hath been all along the unhappy Source of all those Evils that have invaded any of the human Race! Consider, vile unthinking Worm, that this Sin at which thou mockest, or with which thou art delighted, will cost thee eternal Ruin and Misery, if impenitently persisted in. And what wilt thou think of Sin, when in Hell thou shalt lift up thine Eyes? Now thou mockest in thy Cups and Revellings, and amongst thy Companions in Riot and Folly, but then mock if thou canst. Then shalt thou find to thy utter Confusion, what an evil and a bitter Thing it is that thou hast sinned against God; thy own Wickedness shall then severely correct thee, and thy own Backslidings reprove thee.

2dly, Is Sin so hateful in the Sight of God? what Matter of deep Humiliation should it be to us to consider that our Natures are so much defiled and infected with it, and that it hath appeared in so many Instances in our Lives and Practice! As to those that are in an unconverted State, Sin may be said to reign in them; they are absolutely under its Power and Tyranny, and yield themselves the Servants of Unrighteousness unto Sin. And even with regard to those that are renewed and sanctified by the Grace and Spirit

DISCOURSE X. 219

Spirit of God, though Sin does not reign, yet it still dwells in them. *If we say we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us.* Sin mixes even with our best Services, and spreads its defiling Influence through our religious Duties themselves. What an humbling Consideration is this! How should it mortify every proud vain Thought! Surely it becometh us to acknowledge our great Guilt and Unworthiness at the Footstool of a pure and holy Deity, with a deep Repentance and godly Sorrow, and an ingenuous Self-abhorrence, lying in the very Dust before him, and loathing ourselves in our own Sight for all our Iniquities, and for all our Abominations.

3dly, Another Reflection that naturally arises upon this Subject, is this; How glorious should *Christ* be in our Eyes, considered under this Character, that he is come to save us from our Sins! In our present fallen State we are under the Guilt and Dominion of Sin; we cannot deliver ourselves from either, and therefore must be undone without a glorious Deliverer. Such a Deliverer is our Lord *Jesus Christ*, admirably suited to the Necessities of our fallen State. By the Merit of his Obedience, and the atoning Virtue of his Sacrifice, he hath made Satisfaction to divine Justice,

Justice,

Justice, and hath opened a Way for our being pardoned and freed from the condemning Guilt of our Sins upon our sincere Repentance; and by his Word, and the Influences of his Holy Spirit, he is every Way able to free those that give themselves up to be governed by him from the reigning Power of Sin, so that it shall no longer have Dominion over them. How amiable should this render him in our Esteem! The more we see of the Evil of Sin, the more we shall see of the Need we stand in of a Saviour, and of the Glory and Excellency, and suitable Fulness of the Lord *Jesus Christ*. On him therefore let us place our Dependence, yielding ourselves to him as our Saviour and our Lord, upon the reasonable and gracious Terms of the new Covenant, that through him we may be delivered from so dreadful an Evil.

Lastly, Is Sin the Object of God's righteous Detestation and Abhorrence? then beware of allowing yourselves in any Course of known presumptuous Sin. Consider, that whilst you do, the Wrath of God is upon you; it is impossible that your Persons or any of your Services should be pleasing in his Sight. *If I regard Iniquity in my Heart, saith the Psalmist, the Lord will not bear me.* Psal. lxxvi. 18. We are told, that *the Sacrifice of the wicked is an Abomination*

DISCOURSE X. 221

to the Lord. Prov. xv. 8. He is represented as loathing even their most solemn and pompous Acts of external Devotion. *Isa.* i. 11, 12, 13. Let it therefore be our first Care to endeavour to get our Natures renewed and sanctified, and our Hearts cleansed from the Love of Sin, and from the Prevalency of corrupt Lusts, for till this be done, it cannot be expected that the Life and Practice should be holy. Let us stir up all the Powers of our Souls against so monstrous an Evil. Let us make Use of the Reason God hath given us to this Purpose, and be much in all those Considerations that tend to convince us of the Evil and Malignity of Sin, and the dreadful Consequences that shall attend it, and consequently to inspire us with an Hatred and Abhorrence of it. And as we must thus strive with our own Hearts, so from a Sense of our own Weakness and Insufficiency in ourselves, we must be earnest in Prayer to God for the Assistances of his Holy Spirit. We must come to *Christ* by Faith, as the great Physician of Souls, whom God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance and Remission of Sins, and whom he hath sent to bless us in turning us away from our Iniquities. To him we must yield up ourselves, and through him to the blessed God,

as

222 DISCOURSE X.

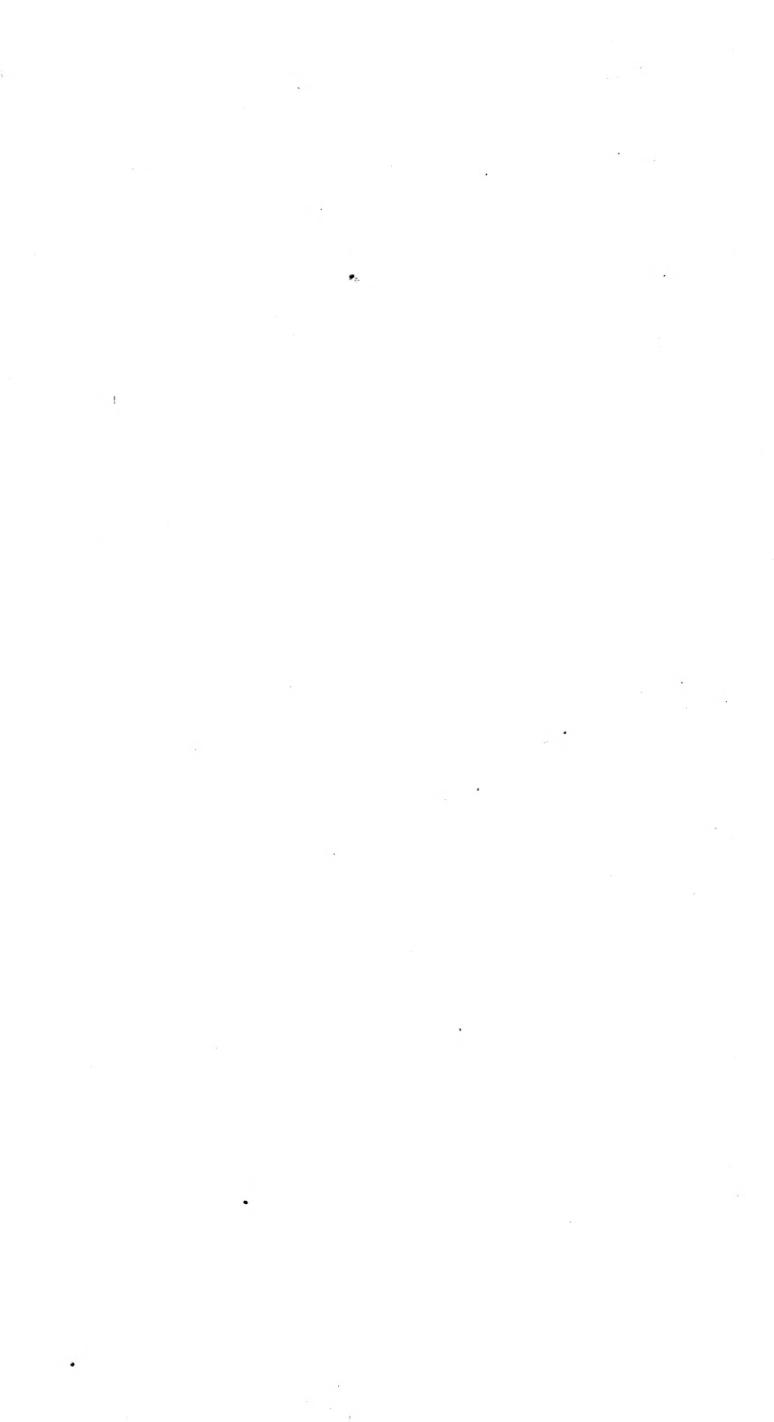
as those that are alive from the dead, and our Members as Instruments of Righteousness unto God, resolving by his Grace, that Sin shall no longer reign in our mortal Bodies that we should obey it in the Lusts thereof.

And having thus given up ourselves to God through *Christ*, and made a sincere Renunciation of Sin, let us endeavour continually to watch, and maintain a Warfare against it. Labour as far as in you lies to suppress the first Risings of Corruption. Watch particularly against those Sins that do most easily beset you. Consider where you are most apt to be overcome, and there double your Guard, that you may keep yourselves from your own Iniquity, from the Sins to which, whether by your natural Constitution and Temperament, or by your Circumstances in the World, or by long Custom and Habit you are more particularly inclined and exposed. Finally, do not indulge yourselves in the habitual Practice of any one known Sin. Come to this as your fixed deliberate Judgment, that the greatest Affliction is rather to be chosen than the least Sin. Guard as far as possible against the Occasions and Temptations leading to Sin, and especially against the Snares of evil Company, and endeavour to *abstain from the Appearance of Evil*, as the
Apostle

DISCOURSE X. 223

Apostle exhorts, 1 *Theff.* v. 22. To assist you in all this, consider God as present, that you are under the all-seeing Eye of an holy and sin-avenging Deity, and that at his solemn Bar we must shortly give an Account of all Things done in the Body, and must receive according to what we have done, whether Good or Evil. Then shall they that have done Good, that have gone on in a patient Continuance in well-doing, come forth to the Resurrection of Life, and shall obtain eternal Glory; but they that have done Evil shall come forth to the Resurrection of Damnation, and shall inherit Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish.

May the Lord impress a deep Sense of this upon all our Hearts, and fit us for that State where the Spirits of the just shall be made perfect, entirely free from Sin, and shall shine in the Beauties of Holiness, and be absolutely eternally transformed into the divine Likeness!



On the Goodness of God.

DISCOURSE XI.

I JOHN iv. 8.

— *God is Love.*

THE Apostle *John*, the Writer of this Epistle, is called the Disciple whom *Jesus* loved, *John* xxi. 20. He was particularly dear to him above any other of his Disciples, though he had a tender Regard for them all. This might probably be on account of the Sweetness and Excellency of his Disposition, and because he more than any of the rest resembled his blessed Lord in that Love and Goodness, that most amiable Temper which is the greatest Attraction of Love. To him therefore with his dying Voice, as knowing his tender Affection and Care, he recommended his Virgin Mother. *John* xix. 26, 27. That divine Benevolence for

[VOL. I.]

Q

which

226 DISCOURSE XI.

which this Apostle was so remarkable, together with a most beautiful, unaffected Simplicity, breathes in every Part of this excellent Epistle. The Spirit of Love guided his Pen, and inspired his Heart. Love to God, and Love to Mankind, is the Sum of the Precepts he enjoins, and which he urgeth with the most affectionate Earnestness. He represents Love and Charity as the great Characteristic of a real Christian, and a Child of God, without which all our Professions of Religion will be ineffectual and vain. To this purpose he declares in the Words preceding the Text: *Beloved, let us love one another, for Love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God.* And then he adds, *For God is Love.* It is this short, but admirable and comprehensive Description here given of God, that I shall now consider. No Words can possibly represent the Deity under a more amiable Character. The Manner of Expression is noble and significant, and hath a wonderful Beauty and Dignity in it. It is not merely said, that God is good, and kind, and beneficent; but he is Love and Goodness itself; the supreme, original, boundless Goodness and Benevolence. Love is essential to him, and inseparable

separable from him. It may be said to constitute his very Nature and Essence. As he is from everlasting to everlasting God, so he is from everlasting to everlasting infinite unchangeable Love and Goodness. He was so before the World was made, and can as soon cease to be God, as cease to be Love.

In treating of this Subject, I shall first offer some general Observations upon the Description here given of God, that *God is Love*.

Secondly, I shall proceed to a more distinct Illustration of it, by mentioning some of those Instances in which the Love and Goodness of God is most eminently exercised and displayed.

Thirdly, I shall take some Notice of those Things which seem to have a contrary Appearance, and which have been made use of as Objections against the divine Goodness.

And then I shall conclude the whole with some proper Reflections.

First, I shall offer some general Observations for clearing and explaining the Character or Description here given of God, that *God is Love*.

God's Love may be considered either as representing himself, or as respecting his Creatures.

His Love, considered as respecting himself, signifieth an infinite, eternal, immutable Complacency in his own glorious Perfections, and in the Fulness of his own Excellency. As he himself is the supreme, the infinite Good, the first amiable, the great Fountain and Original of all Perfection, in whom is to be found whatsoever is perfect, excellent, and lovely, in the highest possible Degree of Eminency; so he is from everlasting to everlasting the Object of his own infinite Love and Delight. Here both the Object and Act of Love is infinite. As there are no Bounds to his Perfection, so neither are there to his Love and Self-complacency, and to the eternal Satisfaction which floweth from it. This is the most exalted Notion we can form of the divine Happiness. It is a pure eternal Source of infinite Joy, always equal and invariable, never capable of any Interruption, or of the least Accession or Diminution. In this Love of himself, *i. e.* Love of infinite Beauty and Excellence, he would have been unconceivably happy, if there had never been any Creature formed, and would be so, though they were all annihilated. As nothing is equal to himself in amiable Excellence, so nothing can equally be the Object of his infinite Love.

But

DISCOURSE XI. 229

But that which we are now to consider, is the Love of God as exercised and manifested towards his Creatures. And his Love, considered in this View, properly consisteth in his pure and steady Benevolence, or Disposition to do them Good, and to promote their Happiness. And this is principally intended here, when it is declared that *God is Love*.

And with regard to this it may be observed,

First, That when it is here said, that *God is Love*, it signifieth that he is perfect Goodness and Benignity, without any Defect, or the least Mixture of any contrary Affection. He is Love without Imperfection or Alloy, Love in its highest Exaltation and unmixed Purity. Love in created Beings is often, even where it is in a prevalent Degree, attended with some Passion which tends to the Diminution of it, or with some private Affections and Views. But in God it is wholly pure and disinterested. He is infinitely happy in himself, and therefore it is impossible that he should envy his Creatures any of the good Things they enjoy, and which are all derived from his Bounty. He *giveth liberally, and upbraideth not*, as *St. James* expresseth it, *James* i. 5. The absolutely perfect Being can have no nar-

row sordid Affections, no particular Interests of his own in View, to cramp the Exercise of his Benevolence. No Ill-will, or Cruelty of Disposition, can possibly have Place in his infinite and most benevolent Mind. He is incapable of delighting in the Pain or Misery of his Creatures, merely for its own Sake, or of doing any Thing needlessly to vex and give them Uneasiness, only to shew his Dominion over them. He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men, but always for wise and good Ends; and is not therefore the proper Cause and Author of their Misery and Ruin. He is the glorious Source and Original of all the Good that is in this vast Universe, and therefore must himself be originally, essentially, and infinitely good.

But secondly, It is proper to observe farther, that though God is said to be Love, it must not be understood as if he were mere infinite Goodness, acting always necessarily to the utmost of its Ability, without Discernment or Distinction. For this would not be a Virtue or Perfection. But his Goodness must be considered as always in Conjunction with, and as guided in all its Effects by infinite Wisdom, and by what appeareth to his all-comprehending Mind to be best and fittest upon the whole.

Though

DISCOURSE XI. 231

Though God be all Love and Goodness, he doth not distribute the Effects of his Goodness by a natural and undistinguishing Necessity, as the Sun dispenfeth its Rays, and a Fountain its Streams, but most freely and voluntarily in such a Manner and in such Proportion as seemeth fit to him in his sovereign Wisdom, which always proceedeth upon the wisest and fittest Reasons. Thus in creating the World he did not act by a natural Necessity, for then he must necessarily have made the World from everlasting; but he made it at that Time and in that Manner, in which his own infinite Understanding saw it was best and fittest it should be made. And in all his subsequent Dealings towards his Creatures after having made them, he exerteth his infinite Goodness, not by an absolute Necessity, to the utmost Extent of his almighty Power, but in such a Manner as is most worthy of himself, and most becoming his own glorious Perfections. His Goodness will always shew itself towards his reasonable Creatures in a Manner becoming him, a sovereign Benefactor, and a wise and righteous moral Governor. He will promote their Happiness in such a Way as to leave room for the Exercise of the Liberty belonging to them as reasonable Beings, moral Agents,

232 DISCOURSE XI.

and will not therefore manifest his Love equally and promiscuously at all Times to the good and bad without Distinction, and without any Regard to their moral Conduct and Behaviour. Such a Notion of the divine Goodness would be dishonourable to the Deity, and of the most pernicious Consequence to the Interests of Religion and Virtue in the World. It would take away the Fear of God, and would tend to dissolve all Order and Government, and to confound the Differences between moral Good and Evil. Let none therefore presume that because God is infinite Love and Goodness, therefore obstinate Sinners have Nothing to fear from him, and may transgress his Laws with Impunity. His Goodness must not be so understood, as to exclude, or be inconsistent with the Exercise of his rectoral and punitive Justice. On the contrary, Goodness itself, considered in the most extensive View, as designing and pursuing the greatest Good of the whole rational Creation, and the Peace, Order, and Harmony of the moral World, includes Justice as one necessary Branch of it. And indeed it may be said, that all God's moral Attributes are the divine Love and Goodness displaying itself in various Views. Even his Justice and Hatred against Sin is his
 Love

DISCOURSE XI. 233

Love of Order, of Purity and Rectitude, of moral Goodness and Beauty. This infinite Love and Goodness carrieth him to have a steady, unalterable Regard to the Happiness and good Order of the rational Creation; and this determineth him to hate Sin, which tends to spread Misery and Disorder through the World, and to do all that is proper for him to do, as a moral Governor, to prevent it, or to stop the Progress of moral Evil, by holy Laws enforced with proper Sanctions. No wise Man ever counted it a Derogation from the Goodness of an earthly Prince, that he maintained the Authority of his Government and Laws, by inflicting proper Punishment on the Transgressors; on the contrary, it would be justly looked upon as a great Diminution of his Character, and even an Impeachment of the Goodness of his Government, if through a soft Indulgence he suffered all manner of Crimes to be committed with Impunity. And shall we ascribe such a Conduct to the supreme Lord and Governor of the World, the infinitely good and absolutely perfect Being? The Goodness of God is that of a most holy and understanding Mind, always exercised in such a Way as is most becoming his own glorious Perfections, and as seemeth most fit to his all-comprehending

234 DISCOURSE XI.

hending Wisdom; and when it is considered in this View, it is infinitely venerable as well as amiable.

Having premised these general Observations for explaining the glorious Description or Character here given of God, that *God is Love*, I shall now proceed to a more distinct Illustration of it, by mentioning some of those Instances in which the Love and Goodness of God is most eminently exercised and displayed.

And here the first Thing to be considered is, that it was owing to the divine Love and Goodness that there were any Creatures formed. The Goodness of God was the original moving Cause in the Creation of the World, and of all the Orders of Beings in it; though as to the Time and Manner of the Creation, it was all under the Direction of his infinite Wisdom. He created this vast Universe, not as if he stood in need of the Creatures, or of any additional Beings besides himself, to contribute to the Completion of his Happiness; but merely of his own overflowing Benignity, and the Delight he taketh in the Communications of his Goodness. It is his sovereign Love and Goodness, directed by the most perfect Wisdom, that gave Existence to this admirable Frame in all its Parts, that hath established the Laws
of

DISCOURSE XI. 225

of this material World, and hath spread such Beauty and Order through the universal System. It is his wise and almighty Love which hath stretched out the Heavens, which hath given Motion, Light, and Heat, to that glorious Body the Sun, and hath assigned the Stars their several Stations or Courses: It is his Love and Goodness that hath laid the Foundations of the Earth, and rendered it a commodious Habitation, and that hath gathered together the Waters as an Heap, and hath laid up the Deep in Store-houses. But especially to his most powerful Goodness it is owing that there has been such an inconceivable Variety of living Creatures brought into Being. He made the glorious Angels in their several bright Orders and Degrees, and gave them their amazing Powers whereby they excel in Wisdom and Strength, and are fitted for enjoying a sublime Felicity. And he made Man a little lower than the Angels, after his own Image, and endued him with excellent Faculties, in the due Improvement of which he is capable of knowing, loving, and enjoying his Maker. He made the various Tribes of Brute Animals, and hath furnished them with admirable Organs, Instincts, and Appetites, suited to the several Kinds of Life for which they are fitted and designed.

And

236 DISCOURSE XI.

And in all the Creatures he hath made, from the meanest of them to the highest, rising one above another in the State of Being, the inexhausted Goodness of the supreme Cause eminently appears. There is indeed a very remarkable Difference between some and others of them in their Capacities, but they are each of them capable of Enjoyments, and of a Happiness suited to their Natures. If there had been only a few Kinds or Species of Beings created, and if they had all been made equal in their Capacities and Endowments, it is evident that the World would have been less compleat and perfect upon the whole than now it is. It tends to the Beauty, Order, and Harmony of the Universe, that there should be the inferior Kinds of Beings, as well as those that are more excellent, and that it should comprehend all the various Degrees of Life from the highest to the lowest. And if we could behold them all at once in their mutual Connections, Subordinations, and Dependencies, in their various Ends and Uses, and the Relation they bear to one another, and to the whole; we should undoubtedly be ravished with an Admiration of the divine Goodness as well as Wisdom, as shining forth in this Constitution of Things.

In

DISCOURSE XI. 237

In the Contemplation of this, the devout Psalmist calls upon all the Creatures to join in blessing and praising the great Creator of the Universe. Of this we have a noble Specimen in the 148th Psalm. He begins with the highest Heavens, and the glorious Angels there; he then calls upon the Sun, Moon, and Stars, to praise the Lord; and thence descends to this Earth, and the various Kinds of Creatures here, the lowest and meanest of them not excepted: for though the inanimate and Brute Creation are of themselves not properly capable of praising God, yet they furnish rational and intelligent Beings with just Matter of Praise to him; and thus the whole Creation contributes to make up one universal Consent in celebrating the Praises of that almighty and most beneficent Being, who commanded and they were created. All his wonderful Works, which are daily before our Eyes, should continually put us in Mind to adore and bless him, and should engage us to cry out with a devout Admiration, *Lord, how manifold are thy Works, in Wisdom and Goodness hast thou made them all.*

We should proceed, in the next Place, to consider the Love and Goodness of God as exercised and displayed in his Dealing towards his Creatures after having made them:

238 DISCOURSE XI.

them: And this will lead us to contemplate the various Benefits of his bountiful Providence, and above all the Wonders of his Love manifested in the Methods of our Redemption by *Jesus Christ*. But we have not Time to enter upon the Consideration of this at present.



On the Goodness of God.

DISCOURSE XII.

I JOHN iv. 8.

— *God is Love.*

I have already offered these Words to your Consideration: In treating of which I proposed,

First, To make some general Observations upon the Character and Description here given of God, that *God is Love.*

Secondly, To proceed to a more distinct Illustration of it, by mentioning some of those Instances in which the Love and Goodness of God is most eminently exercised and displayed.

Thirdly, To confider fome of thofe Things which feem to have a contrary Appearance, and which have been made Ufe of as Objections againft the divine Goodnefs.

And then to conclude the whole with fome proper Reflections.

In my former Difcourfe fome general Obfervations were made for clearing and explaining the glorious Description or Character here given of God, that *God is Love*. And we entered on the fecond Thing propofed, which was to illuftrate it more diftinctly by mentioning fome of thofe Inftances in which the Love and Goodnefs of God is moft eminently exercifed and difplayed. And here it was obferved in the firft Place, that it was owing to the divine Love and Goodnefs that there were any Creatures formed. This was the original impulfive Caufe in the Creation of the World. It was the fovereign unobliged Goodnefs of God, in Conjunction with almighty Power, and directed by the moft perfect Wifdom, that gave Exiftence to this admirable Frame in all its Parts, and fpread fuch Beauty and Order through the univerfal System. It was this that made the Heaven, the Earth, the Sea, and brought fuch an inconceivable Variety of living Creatures into Being
in

DISCOURSE XII. 241

in their feveral Orders and Degrees, all of which, from the higheft to the loweft, are capable of Enjoyment and a Happinefs fuited to their refpective Natures; and confidered in their various Connections and Dependencies, and in the Relations they bear to one another and to the whole, proclaim both the Goodnefs and Wifdom of the great Creator.

Let us now, in the next Place, confider the Love and Goodnefs of God as exercifed and difplayed in his Dealings towards his Creatures after having made them.

And this leads us to contemplate the various Benefits of his bountiful Providence; and above all, the Wonders of his Love manifested in the Methods of our Redemption by *Jesus Chrift*.

First, Let us confider the Goodnefs of God as manifested in the various Benefits of his bountiful Providence.

And what a delightful Contemplation would it be, if we could carry our Views throughout the whole Compafs of the Creation, and behold infinite Love and Goodnefs continually fuftraining and prefiding over every Part of the univerfal Frame, to which it at firft gave Audience, extending its Care and Benignity to all the Orders of Beings in this vaft Univerfe, not

overlooking the meanest, but communicating Happiness to them in unspeakably various Degrees, according to their various Natures and Capacities, and Degrees of Life.

God's Goodness extends to all the different Tribes of Brute Animals, the Fowls of the Air, the Fishes of the Sea, and the Beasts of the Earth. He hath not only furnished them with admirable Organs and Instincts, but in the constant Course of his Providence he makes suitable Provision for them out of the ample Stores of his Bounty, with which this World is abundantly replenished, for their Subsistence and Entertainment. This is what is signified in those beautiful Expressions of the devout Psalmist, *The Eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their Meat in due Season: Thou openest thine Hand, and satisfiest the Desire of every living Thing.* Psal. cxlv. 15, 16.

But especially God's Goodness may be considered as exercised towards his rational Creatures. These also he hath made of various Orders and Degrees; some he hath endued with more excellent Powers and Faculties than others, but all of them in general are made capable of a nobler and sublimer Happiness than the Brutes or merely sensitive Animals. And here, if
we

DISCOURSE XII. 243

we were able to carry our Thoughts through all the bright and glorious Orders of Angels; if we had a full Knowledge of their vast and elevated Capacities, the Splendor and Glory with which they are invested, their noble felicitating Exercises and Enjoyments, the blessed Harmony, Peace, and amiable Concord that reigns among them, what Scenes of Bliss would open to us! what an Exuberance of Happiness! what a ravishing View would this give us of the divine Love and Goodness!

But that which it more particularly concerneth us to consider, is God's Goodness and Benevolence towards Mankind. This eminently shone forth in his Dealings towards Man in the State in which he was at first created. He came pure and innocent out of his Maker's Hands, and was placed in a delightful Region abundantly furnished with the most agreeable Objects for his Use and Entertainment. He was admitted to a near Inter-course with God, and enjoyed the happy Tokens of his Love and Favour. All Things around him proclaimed the Goodness and Beneficence of his Creator, who indulged him in the free Use of all the Delights of Paradise, with one only easy Restraint, as an Instance of the Homage and Fealty

he owed to his sovereign Lord, and which was designed to maintain upon his Mind a constant Sense of his Dependence. And when he most ungratefully transgressed the divine Injunction, and broke the Laws of his Creation, the Sentence justly pronounced upon him for his Disobedience, was at the same Time accompanied with the most gracious Promise of Mercy and Deliverance. And if we survey the divine Dealings towards the human Race ever since, we shall find the Goodness of God manifested in various Ways towards them in their present degenerate and sinful State. Though according to the Account the Scripture giveth us, this Earth would have been a more delightful Habitation if Man had continued in a State of Innocence, and although there was an Alteration for the worse in the Face of this lower World, when Man, the chief Inhabitant of it, sinned against his Maker, yet still it is certain, that even in this present State *the Earth is full of the Goodness of the Lord*, as the Psalmist expresth it, *Psal. xxxiii. 5.* Who can enumerate the manifold Blessings of his common bountiful Providence? We are provided with not only the absolute Necessaries, but with many Conveniences and Accommodations of human Life. Many Things still concur to
render

DISCOURSE XII. 245

render this Earth a commodious and pleasing Habitation. Its Surface is, for the most part, covered with a refreshing Verdure, and diversified with an amazing and most entertaining Variety of Prospects. We may here behold the grateful Intermixture of Hills and Dales, lofty Mountains and wide extended Plains and Lawns, Rivers and Fountains, Woods and Groves, and all the admirable Varieties of the vegetable Kingdom, Plants, Trees, Fruits, and Flowers, of manifold Use and exquisite Beauty, together with the several Kinds of Herbs and Grain, which the Earth bringeth forth in great Abundance. If we look into the Bowels of the Earth, it is replenished with hidden Treasures, vast Quantities of Metals, Stones, and Minerals, capable of being employed by human Art, which also is the Gift of God, for serving a thousand Purposes in human Life, both for real Use and for Ornament. Even the great and wide Sea, that seemingly boisterous and raging Element, is in many Instances subservient to Man's Convenience and to his Pleasure. And if we turn our Views to the animal Creation, the various Kinds of living Creatures, in Earth, Sea, or Air, contribute in their several Way to the Service and Delight of Mankind. Let us next look above us, and behold

246 DISCOURSE XII.

the magnificent Arch of Heaven, which is ever open to our View, a Sight beyond Imagination beautiful and glorious. We are placed in the midst of an august and ample Theatre, than which nothing can be better fitted to strike the Eye, and fill the Mind with Pleasure and Astonishment. Our Saviour justly representeth it as a manifest Proof of the Goodness of God, that he causeth his Sun to shine, and his Rain to descend, even upon the unthankful and the evil. And *St. Paul* declareth, that God hath *not left himself without Witness*, in any Age, *in that he did Good, and gave Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seasons, and filleth our Hearts with Food and Gladness.* Acts. xiv. 17. When the Air breathes upon us its balmy Influence; when we feel the warm, sprightly, and chearing Beams of the Sun, and behold it illuminating and beautifying the Face of Nature; when we see refreshing Rains descend, the Earth made soft with Showers, and the little Hills rejoicing on every Side; when, on the other Hand, we behold the various Beauties of a frosty Scene, and a snowy Landscape; when we observe the constant regular Vicissitudes of Day and Night, and the orderly Succession of Seasons, each of them in their several Ways useful and beautiful; surely in all these Things the

DISCOURSE XII. 247

Goodness and Benignity of the great Parent of the Universe, and the constant Care he taketh of his Creatures, especially of Mankind, as well as his great Wisdom, manifestly appeareth. He hath so constituted us, that even the necessary Means of our Nourishment, of sustaining and preserving Life, yield us very pleasing Sensations. We cannot satisfy the Cravings of Nature, Hunger, Thirst, and other Appetites, without feeling a sensible refreshing Gratification. The Pleasure we take in by the Senses, the Eye, the Ear, the Taste, &c. are sufficient to make most Men desire Life, notwithstanding the Hardships which may attend it. The Blessings of Providence which have been mentioned, are in general common to all Mankind, to those of all Nations and Countries. For even those Parts of the World, which perhaps seem to others uncomfortable and inhospitable Regions, yet have their Advantages and Comforts which recommend them to the Inhabitants, so that they are not willing to change their Clime. To which it may be added, that the poor have their Share in these Pleasures of Life as well as the rich; the Sun shines, the Air breathes its refreshing Influence, the Fountains spring, the Rivers flow, and the Beauties of Nature lie open to all. Yea,

248 DISCOURSE XII.

it often happeneth that the poor have a more exquisite Enjoyment and Sensation of the Bounties of Providence, than those whose abused Plenty and Affluence cloggeth their Senses, and preventeth their waiting the Returns of Appetite.

But besides those sensible Enjoyments which Providence hath so plentifully furnished to render Life agreeable, there are Pleasures provided for Men, even here on Earth, of a higher Kind. Such are not only the Pleasures of the Imagination, which are of a large Extent, and strike the Mind with great Force; but especially the Pleasures which are to be found in the Pursuits and Acquisitions of Knowledge and Science, for which Man is naturally fitted, and which open to us a thousand Avenues of exquisite and refined Entertainment. And the still nobler Joys which result from the Exercise of the kind and social Affections, from good Actions, generous Emotions, from Love, Gratitude, Benevolence, from the Blessings of Society, and the Charms of Friendship; but above all, the divine Satisfaction that floweth from the peaceful Testimony of a good Conscience, and a self-approving Mind, from the Contemplation and Worship of the Deity, and the Exercise of devout Affections towards him, of Love, Reverence,
Resignation

DISCOURSE XII. 249

Resignation, Affiance, from a Sense of his Favour and Approbation, and the pleasing Hopes of Immortality, which Man alone of all the Creatures in this lower World is capable of entertaining, and which have been the principal Support and Comfort of the best of Men in all Ages.

And this leads me to what I proposed to consider in the second Place, *viz.* the glorious Displays of the divine Love and Goodness in the admirable Methods of our Redemption and Salvation by *Jesus Christ*. And to this the Apostle seems here to have a special Reference, when he describes God under this most amiable Character, *God is Love*. For he immediately adds, *In this was manifested the Love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him. Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.*

1 John iv. 9. 10. Love, infinite Love shines forth in the whole astonishing Scheme of our Salvation. We are taught in Scripture to regard it as having had its first Original in the Councils of God's eternal Wisdom, Grace, and Love, before the World was made. Such was the Goodness and Love of God towards us, that upon a Foresight of the wretched and ruin-

250 DISCOURSE XII.

ous State into which we should fall by our Sins, he formed the glorious Design of our Recovery, and chose *us in Christ before the Foundation of the World, that we should be holy, and without Blame before him in Love.* Eph. i. 4. It was Love that in pursuance of his kind and gracious Intentions towards us, caused him to send a Person of such infinite Dignity, his well beloved and only begotten Son, to save and redeem us in the Fulness of Time. The wonderful Love of God to Mankind illustriously appears in the Incarnation of the Son of God, in his holy Life and perfect Example, in his excellent Doctrines and Precepts, and the Revelation he hath brought from Heaven, and his beneficent Miracles, in his grievous Sufferings and Death, whereby he made Atonement for the Sins of the World, in his Resurrection from the dead, and Ascension into Heaven, and Exaltation at the right Hand of the Majesty on high. It is infinite Wisdom and Love that hath constituted him Head over all Things unto his Church, and our great Advocate with the Father, who ever liveth to make Intercession for us, and that hath appointed, that he who is our Saviour should be our final Judge. Love eminently shines forth in the whole Constitution of the Covenant of Grace, which is ratified by the Redeem-
er's

DISCOURSE XII. 251

er's Blood, in its exceeding great and precious Promises, and in its most gracious and condescending Terms. How amiable doth God appear as a God in *Christ*, reconciling the World unto himself, inviting Sinners to forsake their evil Ways, and to lay hold on his offered Grace and Mercy, not imputing their Trespases unto those that return to him by a humble Faith, and sincere Repentance, adopting them into his Family, and admitting them to the Privileges of his Children! *Bekold*, (saith St. *John*,) *what Manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God.* 1 John iii. 1. It is Love that causeth all Things to work together for our Good, that sendeth the Angels to minister unto us, and the Holy Spirit of Grace to assist, guide, and comfort us, to dwell in our Hearts as in his living Temples, and to spread divine Life, and Light, and Joy, through our Souls. It is Love, almighty Love, that will raise our dead Bodies from the Grave, and will admit us to the Glories of his heavenly Kingdom, and make us completely happy in his beatific Presence to all Eternity. With what Joy should we look forward to that glorious Time and State, when the whole general Assembly and Church of the first-born, consisting of all the good Men that
that

252 DISCOURSE XII.

that ever lived from the Foundation of the World, shall be gathered together in Heaven, all united in delightful Love and Harmony, and made perfect in Holiness, and in Glory, and all of them the everlasting Monuments of the divine Grace and Goodness ! Then shall the Designs of the divine Love towards us be completed, and God shall appear to Men and Angels in all the Glory of this amiable Character, that *God is Love*. The heavenly Kingdom is a Kingdom of eternal Love, Peace, and Joy. There infinite Love reigns for ever, and is all in all. Let us now rejoice in the happy Prospects, and endeavour to get our Souls formed more and more into a Meetness for that glorious State ; the best Preparative for which is a Life spent under the governing Influence of holy Love, Love to God, and Love to Mankind.

Thus have I mentioned some of those Instances in which the Love and Goodness of God is most eminently exercised and displayed.

In our next Discourse we shall take Notice of some Things which seem to have a contrary Appearance, and which are urged as Objections against the divine Love and Goodness.

On the Goodness of God.

DISCOURSE XIII.

I JOHN iv. 8.

—*God is Love.*

IN my former Discourses on this Subject I first offered some general Observations for explaining the Description here given of God, that *God is Love*: And then I proceeded to a more distinct Illustration of this amiable and glorious Character, and took Notice of some of those Instances in which the Love and Goodness of God is most eminently exercised and displayed towards his Creatures, and especially towards Mankind. It appears in the various Benefits of his common bountiful Providence: but above all it is illustriously
manifested

254 DISCOURSE XIII.

manifested in the wonderful Methods of our Redemption and Salvation by *Jesus Christ*; which is what the Apostle seems particularly to have in View, when he here declareth that *God is Love*.

I now come, according to the Order proposed, to consider some of those Things which have been urged as Objections against the divine Goodness. And it must be owned that there are great Difficulties in the Course of God's providential Administrations, which in our present State of Darkness and Imperfection we find it hard to account for, and to reconcile to the infinite Love and Goodness of the Supreme Being.

And the first Thing of this kind that I shall mention, is the Entrance of Sin into the World, and the permitting the Fall of Men and Angels, in consequence of which innumerable Evils and Mischiefs have been spread through the Creation of God, and disturbed the Order of the Universe. It should seem that a Being of boundless Goodness, in Conjunction with almighty and irresistible Power, if exerting himself to the utmost of his Ability, might have prevented the Fall both of Angels and Men, and might have maintained them in a constant invariable Integrity and Innocence; so that there should
have

DISCOURSE XIII. 255

have been no Sin, and consequently none of those Miseries that have flowed from it. But in Answer to this it ought to be considered, that it is no Impeachment of the Wisdom and Goodness of God, but, on the contrary, a signal Instance of both, that he hath made reasonable Creatures endued with Liberty and free Agency, and a Power of determining their own Actions. If there had been no such Beings formed, it would have been evidently a great Defect in the rational and moral Creation. And if God thought fit to create such Beings, it was not proper to lay them under an absolute irresistible Constraint, but to leave them to the free Use of their own natural and moral Powers. It is certainly a noble Privilege for any Being to be endued with Understanding, Liberty, Reason, and Choice; and those Creatures which are endued with such Powers, are of a higher and more excellent Kind, than those that want them, and capable of a much greater and more sublime Felicity. And if they abuse their Liberty, and those noble Powers, shall the Fault be laid upon infinite Goodness, and not upon their own wilful Abuse and Perversion of the Advantages given them? If it be no Defect of Goodness in God to make free Agents, *i. e.* Creatures capable of sinning, it is no Defect

256 DISCOURSE XIII.

Defect of Goodness to permit them to use their Liberty, and consequently to permit them to sin: especially when it is considered, that God hath done what is proper for him to do as a moral Governor, to prevent their sinning against him, by giving them holy Laws enforced by Promises and Threatenings; and that such is his transcendent Goodness, that he takes Occasion even from the Sins of Men to exhibit the most illustrious Displays of his rich Grace and Mercy, in recovering and restoring them to Holiness and Happiness, if they will but accept his gracious Offers, and comply with his kind Intentions for their Salvation.

This leads me to another Objection which hath been made against the divine Goodness; and that is God's constituting Men in a State of Trial, in a World full of Snares, where they are exposed to manifold Dangers and Temptations, which such frail Creatures, of such Passions and Infirmities, are scarce able to resist. But it should obviate this Difficulty to consider, that a wise and merciful God is ready to make all proper Allowances for their Weaknesses and Infirmities in this present State, if their Hearts be sincere and upright towards him: He pitieth them as a Father pitieth his Children; for he knoweth

DISCOURSE XIII. 257

knoweth their Frame, he remembereth that they are but Dust. He hath furnished them with Means, which if duly improved will be of great Use for overcoming those Temptations, and is ready to help their Infirmities with the gracious Assistances of his Holy Spirit. The very Design of his placing them in a State of Trial, is to discipline and train them up in a Meetness for a nobler State of Existence, to which he intendeth to raise them; and the Reward he will confer upon them will in Greatness and Glory infinitely transcend all that they could have pretended to challenge or expect as the Reward of their Troubles and Labours in this State of Trial.

But 3dly, Some have been ready to arraign the divine Goodness for giving to some of his Creatures greater Advantages than to others. It cannot be denied that there is a great Difference made between some and others of the human Race, both in their outward Condition and Circumstances, and in their Opportunities for moral and religious Improvement, which seems not to be consistent with that Goodness of God which extendeth over all his Works. But since he doth a great deal of Good to all, why should it be thought an Objection against the Goodness of the

258 DISCOURSE XIII.

supreme Benefactor, who is the absolute Lord of his own Gifts, that he doeth more for some than for others? No Rule of Goodness requireth that he should either make all the Species of Beings equal in Excellence; for then there would be no inferior Species of Creatures at all, but every Worm must be an Angel; or that all of the same Species should be endued with Capacities every way equal, or be exactly placed in the same Situation, and have the same Privileges. If some are favoured with greater Advantages for Improvement than others, it is sufficient to justify the Goodness of God towards his reasonable Creatures, that as he now conferreth many Benefits upon all, so in the final Account he will deal equitably with all, and will require no more of any of them, than according to the Means that were put into their Hands. They shall be accepted according to what they had, and not according to what they had not.

4thly, Another Objection which has been often urged against the divine Goodness, is drawn from the Evils of various Kinds with which this World abounds. The Calamities incident to the human Race are too many to be enumerated. Man that is born of a Woman, though of
few

DISCOURSE XIII. 259

few Days, is full of Trouble. And would it be thus, if all Things were under the Direction and Administration of infinite Goodness? But it would tend very much to take off the Force of this Objection, to consider that many of those Things which are equally called natural Evils, are the Effects of wise and good general Laws, which, though they may in particular Instances bring Inconveniencies, are very much for the Benefit of the whole. It were easy to illustrate this, if there were Time now to enter upon a distinct Consideration of it. But what ought chiefly to be observed, is, that the Evils to which Men are subject here on Earth, are principally owing to themselves, and are either the natural Effects, or the just Punishment of their Sins. The greatest Sorrows and Calamities that spread Trouble and Disorder through human Life, are either brought upon them by their own irregular Appetites and Passions, or by the Injustice, the Fraud, and Violence of other Men. Except God should interpose by his own almighty Power to hinder Men from sinning, *i. e.* to hinder them from the free Use of their own Powers, or to stop the natural Effects and Consequences of their Actions, there must be many Evils in a World where

260 DISCOURSE XIII.

Sin ſo much abounds. And it hath ſeemed fit to him in his great Wiſdom to permit thoſe Evils, to make Men ſenſible of the bad Conſequences of Sin, and the Tendency it has to make them miſerable. And yet after all, when we conſider that *the Earth is ſtill full of the Goodneſs of the Lord*, Pſal. xxxiii. 5. when we reflect on the many ſignal Benefits that are ſtill poured forth upon ſinful Men, amidſt the daily Indignities they offer to the divine Majeſty, we ſhall find Reaſon, inſtead of charging God as deficient in Kindneſs towards us in this preſent State, to admire the Riches of his Goodneſs and Forbearance and Long-ſuffering.

If it be farther objected, that even the beſt and moſt excellent Men are liable to a Variety of Evils and Afflictions in this preſent State, and often have a larger Share of them than other Men, which ſeems ſcarce reconcilable to the Juſtice and Goodneſs of God, it ſhould ſilence all Murmurings to conſider, that beſides that we may look upon thoſe to be good and righteous Perſons who are not really ſo, the beſt of Men in this preſent State are not free from Sin; they are chargeable with Offences and Tranſgreſſions of the divine Law, and it may be juſtly ſaid under all the Chaſtiſements they meet with, that
 God

DISCOURSE XIII. 261

God punisheth them less than their Iniquities have in Strictness of Justice deserved, so that they have Reason to sing of Mercy as well as of Judgment. And farther, it ought to be considered that Afflictions are sent for wise and gracious Purposes, and answer many valuable Ends; such as the putting them upon serious Reflections on their own Ways, the restraining and correcting evil Habits, the weaning their Affections from the Objects and Enjoyments of this present World, and the exercising and improving the noblest Virtues, some of which, as Patience, Resignation, a forgiving Disposition, a rendering Good for Evil, and a Confidence in God under the greatest Difficulties and Distresses, have not a proper Opportunity of exerting themselves but in Adversity. And finally, we are assured both that God will grant to good Men his gracious Assurances and Supports under Afflictions and Trials, and that he will, in his infinite Wisdom and Love, over-rule the seemingly severest Dispositions for the greater Benefit of his Children. And shall we arraign the divine Goodness on the Account of those Things which are necessary Medicines for healing our spiritual Maladies? Or shall we find Fault with those temporary Afflictions and

Troubles which are designed to form us into a Meekness for a better World, and to work for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory?

The last Objection I shall take Notice of against the divine Goodness, is drawn from the Punishments which shall be inflicted upon the wicked in a future State. But in Answer to this it should be considered, that if God governeth reasonable Creatures, moral Agents, he must govern them in that Way in which it is proper that such Creatures should be governed, that is, by Laws given them as the Rule of their Duty; in which Case, it is necessary that these Laws should be enforced by proper Sanctions, which cannot be without threatening Punishments against the Transgressors of those Laws. And it is evident, that if there were to be no future Punishments, the Evils which attend Sin in this Life would be no Way sufficient to deter Men from committing it. Now *because Sentence against an evil Work is not executed speedily, therefore the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully set in them to do Evil.* Eccles. viii. 11. But much worse would it be, if they generally thought it would never be executed at all. If there were to be no future Account or Punishments, the worst of Men, and who do the greatest
 Mischiefs

DISCOURSE XIII. 263

Mischief in the World, would not only be often unpunished, but would be attended with great Prosperity and Success, and continue so to the End. And if Men were to be treated in this Manner, why not all other rational Beings throughout the Universe? And if they were all suffered to transgress the divine Laws without Fear of being punished or called to an Account for their Conduct, what a dismal Scene of Confusion would this introduce! Where would be the Appearance of the divine Wisdom and Goodness in such a disorderly State of Things? Would this look like a World formed and governed by infinite Wisdom and Love, if Vice, Injustice, and Wickedness, were suffered to ravage without Control? How wrong then is it to find Fault with the Goodness of the supreme Governor, because he seeth fit to inflict Punishments upon the obstinate Transgressors of his Laws, without which his Authority and Laws would be contemned, and all Things run into Confusion! It may be justly said, that the very Goodness of God, and the Regard he hath to the Order and Harmony of the Universe, and the Welfare and Happiness of the rational Creation, must needs carry him to hate Sin, and to do what becometh him as a wise and righteous Governor to prevent it, by denouncing awful Punish-

264 DISCOURSE XIII.

ments to deter Persons from committing it. The Threatenings therefore of Punishments are made with a good and salutary Design; and if it be not inconsistent with Goodness to threaten Punishment, it is not inconsistent with it ordinarily to execute those Threatenings. To suppose that the Goodness of God will not suffer him to inflict those Punishments which his Wisdom and Goodness saw it necessary to threaten, would be a most absurd and self-contradictory Supposition. And if his reasonable Creatures entertained this Notion of the divine Goodness, it would expose the divine Government more than if there were no Punishments threatened at all. And whatever Appearance of Severity the inflicting the threatened Punishments may carry in it, with regard to the particular Persons that are punished; though, considering that they had fair Warning given them, and that they had it in their Power by a contrary Conduct to have obtained a Reward and Happiness infinitely transcending all they could have pretended to have merited, they shall have none to blame but themselves; yet, I say, if there should be any Thing that should look like Severity to those particular Persons, it is certainly a Kindness to the whole. We are assured, however, in Scripture, that among
those

DISCOURSE XIII. 265

those that shall be punished in a future State, there shall be a great Difference made between some and others in the Degree of their Punishment. Some shall be beaten with more, some with fewer Stripes; nor shall any be punished above the real Demerit of their Crimes. Upon the whole, the Punishments reserved for the wicked in a future State are no more inconsistent with the Character here given of God, that *God is Love*, or an Objection against his Goodness, than it is an Impeachment of the Goodness of a wise and clement Prince, or inconsistent with the Welfare and Happiness of a well-regulated State, that there are Jails and Prisons provided for Malefactors, and suitable Punishments allotted to their Crimes. And it is probable, that taking in the whole rational Creation throughout the wide extended Universe, the Number of those that are thus made the Monuments of the divine Justice shall be but small, compared with the whole Number of those who shall be happy in the divine Love and Favour.

I would conclude this Discourse with observing, that we should take great Care never to entertain any harsh or injurious Thoughts of the divine Goodness, even though we should meet with Difficulties relating to it which we are not well able

to

266 DISCOURSE XIII.

to solve. Nothing admits of a clearer Demonstration, than that the absolutely perfect Being, who is infinitely happy in himself, self-sufficient and all-sufficient, must needs be incapable of Envy or Ill-will, or any Thing that argues a narrow or cruel, or malignant Disposition; and that he who is the Author and Cause of all the Good, the Order, the Happiness, which is to be found in the whole Creation, must himself be infinitely good. In this the Voice of Nature and Reason perfectly harmonizeth with the Declarations and Representations made of him in his holy Word. Let us therefore lay this down as a Principle for ever unshaken, that God is perfectly good; and this being once well fixed and established in our Minds, we must not suffer any seeming contrary Appearances to disturb or unsettle us from the firm Belief and Persuasion of it. If therefore there be any Thing in the Course of the divine Dispensations which we cannot well reconcile to our Notions of the divine Love and Goodness, we should attribute this, not to any Defect of real Goodness of God, but to the Narrowness of our own Minds, and to our Want of comprehending them in their full Harmony. We only see a Part of his Ways, and cannot carry our View through the whole

DISCOURSE XIII. 267

Universe at once, and through all Times and Ages, and see all the Connections and Dependencies of Things, and the Relations they bear to one another and to the whole, and therefore may easily be mistaken, and judge those Things not to be just or good, which are really, all Things considered, the best. We should be persuaded in all such Cases, that if we could behold Things in their proper Connection and Harmony, as they lie open to God's all-comprehending Mind, they would have a quite different Aspect from what they now have to us, and would appear to be most wisely, and kindly, and fitly ordered.

I propose in my next Discourse to conclude this Subject with some suitable Reflections upon the whole.

On the Goodness of God.

DISCOURSE XIV.

I JOHN iv. 8.

— *God is Love.*

IT ought mightily to recommend the Holy Scriptures to our Esteem, that they tend to form our Minds to the most sublime and worthy Notions of God, and of his glorious and adorable Perfections. But among all the Descriptions there given us of the Deity, there is none more amiable and comprehensive than this, that *God is Love.* And accordingly this is what I have endeavoured to consider in several Discourses. And in treating of this Subject I proposed,

First,

270 DISCOURSE XIV.

First, To offer some general Observations for clearing and explaining the glorious Description here given of God, that *God is Love*.

Secondly, To illustrate this more distinctly, by taking Notice of some of those Instances in which the Love and Goodness of God towards his Creatures, especially towards Mankind, is more eminently exercised and displayed.

Thirdly, To consider some of the Things which seem to have a contrary Appearance, and which have been made use of as Objections against the divine Goodness.

Thus far I have proceeded in my former Discourses on this Subject. I shall now conclude the whole with some suitable Reflections.

And 1st, Since *God is Love*, this should engage us to love him with a superlative Affection. Love is the most powerful Attractive of Love. If we do but hear of a Man of diffusive Benignity, who delighteth in doing Good to all about him, we can scarce help having an Affection and Esteem for him, though we ourselves have reaped no particular Advantage from his Bounty. But if he be also a Person to whom we are under great Obligations, our Temper must be of the most base and ungenerous Alloy not to love such an one. And shall
we

DISCOURSE XIV. 271

we not then love the supreme boundless Goodness and Benevolence, the everlasting Cause and Source of all that is good and amiable? Shall we not love that most beneficent Being, to whose Benignity we owe all the good Things of every Kind that we enjoy; who is doing Good, not only now and then, but continually, not merely to a few here and there, but to numberless Orders of Beings? How should we love and admire the glorious Original and Fountain from whence those Streams of Blessings flow, which spread Joy and Gladness through all Nature! It is he that hath stretched out the glorious Expanse of Heaven, with all its rich and radiant Furniture; who giveth the Sun for a Light by Day, and the Ordinances of the Moon and Stars for a Light by Night, who commandeth the Clouds to drop down Rains and Dews, and to form a fair and spacious Canopy over our Heads, and hath spread the Earth before us in all its beautiful Attire, and enriched it with such an unspeakable Variety of Productions for the Advantage of human Life; who taketh Care in his wise and good Providence, that Seed-time and Harvest, and Cold and Heat, and Summer and Winter, and Day and Night do not cease; who hath so liberally stored all Nature around us, Earth, Sea, and Air,
with

272 DISCOURSE XIV.

with numberless Objects admirably fitted to entertain and gratify the Senses which he hath given us. These Things, because they are so common and daily repeated, we are apt, through a strange Inattention and Insensibility of Mind, to pass over with a slight Regard; whereas, the Commonness of them is that which above all manifesteth the Extensiveness and Riches of the divine Benignity. And then, to bring it nearer to our own Case, let us consider the divine Goodness, not only as variously exercised towards all Mankind in general, but to ourselves in particular. There is none of us but must upon due Recollection be sensible that the Goodness of God hath followed us all our Days. He hath granted us Life and Favour, and his Visitation hath preserved our Spirits. How manifold are the Experiences we have had of his kind Providence watching over us, and taking Care of us in every Stage and Condition of Life, delivering us from Dangers, supporting us under Distresses, and providing for us out of the Stores of his Bounty! We are in the continual Possession and Enjoyment of a thousand Mercies. All the Blessings which we have ever received, or which we now enjoy, whether relating to our Bodies or to our Souls, yea and the Acts of Kindness done us by our
Fellow-

DISCOURSE XIV. 273

Fellow-creatures, the Benefits we receive from our earthly Benefactors, are to be ultimately ascribed to the Goodness of his superintending Providence. It should be our Language therefore, as it was that of the devout Psalmist, *How precious are thy Thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the Sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in Number than the Sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.* Psal. cxxxix.

17, 18. But above all, it should fill us with the highest Admiration of God's infinite Goodness, to consider the wonderful Methods of his Wisdom and Grace for the Redemption and Salvation of lost perishing Sinners of the human Race. The eternal Father sending his only begotten Son into the World to become incarnate, suffer, and die for our Sakes, to instruct us by his Doctrine, to guide by his excellent Laws and by his holy Example, and to make Atonement for our Sins by his grievous Sufferings and Death: The Son condescending to take upon him our Nature, and to submit to the deepest Humiliations, and the most bitter Agonies and Passions, and even to the cruel and ignominious Death of the Cross, for us Men, and for our Salvation: The Holy Spirit sent by the Father and the Son to quicken, enlighten, and sanctify us, to assist us in our Duty,

274 DISCOURSE XIV.

and comfort us in all our Tribulation! *Behold, what Manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God!* And if we be Sons, then are we *Heirs, Heirs of God, and Joint-heirs with Christ, Heirs according to the Hope of eternal Life.* What could God have done more for us that he hath not done? And shall we not love so good a God, so infinitely amiable in himself, so full of Love and Kindness towards us; our most gracious and bountiful Benefactor, and our most merciful heavenly Father? Shall we not love infinite Love and Goodness itself? Not to do so would argue a Mind depraved to the most astonishing Degree. Surely the Mercies of God should engage us to present our Bodies and our Souls a living Sacrifice, holy and acceptable in his Sight, which is our reasonable Service. Overcome and captivated by the sacred Charms of infinite Love and Goodness, let us heartily renounce every Thing that is contrary to his holy Nature and Will, and make an absolute, affectionate, unreserved Dedication and Surrender of ourselves to the God of Love, sensible that we are his by the most endearing Obligations, and that in him alone we can be happy. Let it be the real Language of our Hearts to God, *Whom have I in Heaven*
but

DISCOURSE XIV. 275

but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee. Our Love cannot shew itself towards him, as his doth to us, by doing him Good, and contributing to promote his Happiness. But since his Love and Goodness is continually descending upon us in a Variety of Blessings, our Love should ascend to him in suitable Returns of holy and devout Affections, in a most grateful Acceptance of his marvellous Benefits, in a thankful Admiration of his immense Goodness, and in adoring Praises and Acknowledgments. But especially our Love to him should shew itself by a chearful, uniform, persevering Obedience to his holy and excellent Laws; *for this is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments.* 1 John v. 3. by a diligent Performance of the Duties which he requireth; by a ready Submission and Resignation to the Orders of his Providence, and a chearful Complacency in his Dispensations, regarding them as the Appointments of infinite Wisdom and Love; and finally, by endeavouring to resemble him more and more in his Goodness and Beneficence, and in his Grace and Mercy. Let us be *Followers of God, as becometh dear Children, and walk in Love.* Ephes. v. 1, 2. It is by this that we shall manifest our heavenly Extraction, and that we are

276 DISCOURSE XIV.

under the Conduct of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of divine Love. *For Love is of God; and he that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God; as the Apostle expresseth it in the Words preceding the Text: And he adds, Ver. 11. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* Let us therefore be ready, as we have Opportunity, to do Good unto all Men. We should pursue our Meditations of the divine Love and Goodness, till a fair Copy of that eternal Goodness and Beauty be drawn upon our Souls, and till we find our Spirits wrought into a Conformity to the supreme Benevolence.

2dly, Since *God is Love*, let us rejoice and delight ourselves in him, as represented to us under this most amiable Character. If we frequently regard him in this View, he would appear to our Souls, not a frightful and forbidding, but a most lovely and inviting Object. We should then be able to say with the pious Psalmist, *I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing Praise unto my God, while I have my Being. My Meditation of him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord.* Psal. civ. 33, 34. What Pleasure would this spread through our Prayers and Praises! We should then find a divine Delight in approaching to the God of Love, and maintaining Communion

DISCOURSE XIV. 277

nion with him. With what Satisfaction should we behold infinite Love and Goodness presiding over this vast Universe, diffusing its benign Influences through every Part of the Creation, ordering and disposing all Events in the best and fittest Manner, ever watching over the Good of the whole, and providing for that of every particular Creature, so far as is consistent with the universal Good. We should rejoice in the Comforts and Blessings of this Life, as the Effects and Gifts of the divine Bounty, and should in them taste and see that the Lord is good and gracious. But especially, we should rejoice in the Hopes and Prospects of eternal Blessings to be enjoyed in God's immediate Presence and Kingdom above. We should delight in the Laws he hath given us as the Prescriptions of his Love, the fair Transcripts of his Goodness as well as Purity, and as plainly designed for the true Perfection and Happiness of our Nature. Yea, we should rejoice in Tribulations also, considering them as permitted, over-ruled, and ordered, in every Circumstance, by infinite Wisdom and Goodness. In all our Afflictions let us still remember that *God is Love*; and that *whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth*. Heb. xii. 6. Those whom we look upon to be the nearest and best of earthly

278 DISCOURSE XIV.

Friends may forsake us, and prove inconstant in their Affections; but it is the Language of divine Love, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* Heb. xiii. 5. And again, *Can a Woman forget her sucking Child, that she should not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.* Isa. xlix. 15. Here then is the most powerful Support under all our Troubles, the most sovereign and effectual Restorative in all the Faintings of our Spirits, *God is Love*, eternal, unchangeable Love and Goodness. Can we think that such a blessed and most amiable Description of the Deity is set before us in his Word, in vain and to no Purpose? Why was it inserted there, but that we should consider it, and give him the Glory, and take to ourselves the Comfort of it? When we are cast down under a deep Sense and Conviction of our Guilt and Unworthiness, let us oppose this amiable Character of God to the Fears and Doubtings of a desponding Mind. Consider, dejected Soul, if thou hadst merely a finite Goodness to deal with, thou mightest well sink into Despair, but God is infinite, essential, boundless Love and Benevolence. Hath not he proclaimed his Name, *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth,*

DISCOURSE XIV. 279

Truth, forgiving Iniquities, and Transgression; and Sin? Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. What amiable Displays hath he made of his wonderful Love, and the exceeding Riches of his Grace in the Redeemer! Behold that God, who is Love itself, seated on a Throne of Grace, ready to receive thee upon thy penitent Return. Come to him therefore as under this amiable Character, for he delighteth not in the Death of Sinners, but rather that they should turn from their evil Ways, and live. Cast thyself wholly on his sovereign Grace and Goodness; yield thyself to him the God of Love through *Jesus Christ* the Son of his Love, and thankfully lay hold on the Offers of his Grace upon the most reasonable and merciful Terms of the new Covenant. *O give Thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his Mercy endureth for ever.* Rejoice in the glorious Riches of his Grace, saying with a humble and grateful Admiration, *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth Iniquity, and passeth by the Transgression of the Remnant of his Heritage? he retaineth not his Anger for ever, because he delighteth in Mercy.* Micah vii. 18.

3dly, The last Reflection I would make on this Subject, is, that it highly concerneth us to take Care that we do not abuse the divine Goodness, or take Encouragement

ment from this to go on in a Course of presumptuous Sin and Difobedience. There is nothing that fetteth the Evil of Sin in fo strong a Light as its being committed againft the Love and Goodnefs of the beft of Beings, our moft gracious and bountiful Benefactor. If any Man fhould declare in exprefs Words, Because God is kind and good, and is daily loading me with his Benefits, therefore will I offend and difhonour him, and trample his Laws and Covenant under my Feet; I fay, if we fhould hear any Man openly declare this, it would appear fo monftrous, that it would be apt to fill our Souls with Horror. And yet, whatever obftinate presumptuous Sinners may profefs in Words, this is the real Language of their Practice. They pre-fume upon his Mercy and Indulgence, and flatter themfelves that he is good, that he will not be fevere to punifh them for their Transgreffions; and therefore they allow themfelves in a Course of wilful Difobedience to his known Commands, and venture to fly in the Face of his Authority and Government. Thus they defpife *the Riches of his Goodnefs, and Forbearance, and Long-fuffering, not knowing, i. e. not confidering, that the Goodnefs of God leadeth to Repentance,* as the Apoftle expreffeth it, *Rom. ii. 4.* But let fuch Perfons confider, that

DISCOURSE XIV. 281

that the Love and Goodness of God is not a soft passionate Tenderness, like that of a too fond and indulgent Parent, or of a weak and unsteady Prince, but it is a Goodness ever in Conjunction with infinite Wisdom, and with the most unspotted Rectitude and Purity, and the most impartial Justice and Righteousness. God is merciful, infinitely merciful, but his Mercy is exercised in such a Way as is consistent with the Glory of his infinite Perfections, and the Order and Authority of his Government. His Goodness is such as becometh the wise and holy Governor of the World, and therefore will not fail to punish the obstinate Despisers of his Authority and Laws. Those who are so base and disingenuous as to continue in Sin because Grace hath abounded, shall find in the Issue that abused Goodness is the most dreadful Thing in the World. By wilful Impenitency and Disobedience we shall shut up our Souls against the Influences and Irradiations of the supreme Love and Goodness. And then, though God be infinitely good, we shall be miserable, we shall banish ourselves from the Joys of his beatific Presence, and shall draw down upon us the most awful Effects of his righteous Displeasure. It is only in a Course of sincere Piety and Virtue that we

can

282 DISCOURSE XIV.

can hope to be admitted to the sacred Intimacies of Communion with the God of Love, and may, upon good Grounds, look forward with Joy to that glorious State where infinite Love shall take us into its nearest Embraces, and we shall be perfectly happy in the immediate Vision and Fruition of God to all Eternity.



*On the Truth and Faithfulness of
God.*

DISCOURSE XV.

PSALM cxvii. 2.

*The Truth of the Lord endureth for ever.
Praise ye the Lord.*

THE Attributes and Perfections of God furnish a Subject for our Meditations, which is both in itself the most noble and glorious that can enter into the Mind of Man, and is also of the highest Use. Especially it is of great Advantage to us frequently to turn our Thoughts and Views to his moral Attributes and Excellencies, the Contemplation of which not only tends to fill our Minds with an
Esteem

284 DISCOURSE XV.

Esteem and Admiration of the Deity, but to form us into his Image and Resemblance, in which the highest Glory and Felicity of the reasonable Nature doth consist. And among God's moral Attributes and Excellencies his Goodness and Truth are eminently conspicuous, and accordingly they are frequently joined together in the sacred Writings. Thus when God proclaims his own glorious Name, he represents himself as *abundant in Goodness and Truth*. Exod. xxxiv. 6. To the same Purpose, Psal. lxxxvi. 15, *Thou, Lord, art a God full of Compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in Mercy and Truth*. And the Psalm, of which the Words of the Text is a Part, is a brief Exhortation to all Nations to bless and praise God, both for his Goodness and Mercy, and for his Truth. *O praise the Lord, all ye Nations; praise him all ye People: For his merciful Kindness is great towards us; and the Truth of the Lord endureth for ever. Praise ye the Lord*. It is the latter of these that I design to consider at this Time; and it is an Attribute with which we have a particular Concernment. The Life we are to live here on Earth, is a Life of Faith; and divine Faith hath the Truth of God for its Object. It fixes on this glorious Attribute

DISCOURSE XV. 285

tribute as the firm and stable Foundation on which it relies.

In treating of this Subject, I shall, first, offer something by Way of Explication, to shew what we are to understand by *the Truth of the Lord* here mentioned.

Secondly, I shall endeavour to illustrate the Psalmist's Observation, that *the Truth of the Lord endureth for ever*; it is everlasting, and shall never fail: And then I shall proceed to what I principally intend, the practical Improvement of this Subject.

First, I shall offer something, by Way of Explication, to shew what we are to understand by *the Truth of the Lord* here mentioned.

Truth among Men is taken in various Views.

It is taken, 1st, as opposed to Lying and wilful Prevarication; and thus it supposes, that our Words must be conformable to our inward Thoughts, and not uttered with an Intention to deceive. In this Sense, a Man is said to be a Man of Truth and Veracity when his Words are the faithful Interpreters of his Mind, so that he doth not speak contrary to his own Sentiments, he doth not speak one Thing and think another.

2dly, Truth is taken as opposed, not only to wilful Lying, but to Mistake and Error;

286 DISCOURSE XV.

Error; and so it supposes that our Words must not only be agreeable to the Sentiments and Intentions of our Minds, but to the Reality of Things. A Man may, through Mistake, speak a Thing which is in itself false, thinking it to be true; and in this Case he cannot be said to be guilty of lying, because he speaks according to his own Thoughts; but yet he cannot be said to say the Truth, because the Thing is in itself false, though he doth not know it to be so. Truth therefore, in its largest Sense, is opposed, not only to wilful Lying, but even to involuntary Mistake or Error, to all Falshood whatsoever whether intended or not.

3dly, Truth, as particularly relating to Promises, signifies Faithfulness to those Promises, whereby, having once engaged our Word, we are steady to our Engagements; and in this Sense Truth is opposed, not only to a designed Cheat, but to Fickleness and Inconstancy in our Purposes and Promises.

Finally, Truth signifies a Sincerity in our Actions and in our general Conduct, a fair Openness and candid Simplicity as opposed to Hypocrisy and Guile, to all double Dealings and dark Disguise.

Having thus briefly stated the Notion of Truth, let us apply this to the blessed God,
and

DISCOURSE XV. 287

and see what the Truth of the Lord is which is here mentioned.

And 1st, If we consider Truth as opposed to wilful Lying and Prevarication, and saying that which is false with an Intention to deceive; in this Sense, Truth, as it belongeth to God, signifies, that in all the Revelations he makes of his Mind and Will, he deals sincerely with his Creatures, and doth not say any Thing with an Intention to deceive them. He doth not in his Word say one Thing whilst he thinks or intends another. His secret Will is never contrary to his revealed, but all the Revelations he makes are the true Significations of his Mind and Intentions; his Words are agreeable, if we may so speak, to the Thoughts of his Heart, so that by them we may certainly know what his Mind is, as far as it is proper for us to know it. Indeed no Revelation can convey to us the Thoughts and Designs of God in their full Perfection and Extent as they lie in his own infinite Mind; for then what human Language could be able to represent them, and what human Mind could be able to conceive them? The Revelations he gives are in a Way suited to our Capacities, expressed in our own Language as far as we are able to receive them, and consequently the Discovery is not full and adequate, but yet it
is

is just, and fitted to instruct us in the Mind and Will of God as far as it is useful or necessary for us to be acquainted with his Counsels.

2dly, Truth as ascribed to God is opposed, not only to all wilful Lying and Prevarication, but it is opposed to all Mistake and Error. So that it signifies that the Revelations God gives, are not only the just Significations of his Mind and Will, but they are most certain in themselves; they are not only conformable to the Intentions of the Revealer, but to the Truth and Reality of Things. The best of Men are liable to Mistake and Error, and it often happens, that being mistaken themselves, they vent Falshood for Truth, and lead others into Error without designing it. But as God himself is the supreme Truth, he is not only incapable of lying, but he is incapable of mistaking too. All his Revelations therefore are infallibly true. He delivereth Nothing but what is in itself certain, without the least Mistake in any one Proposition or Doctrine, or in any one Fact or Circumstance that he is pleased to reveal.

3dly, If we consider the Truth of God with a particular Regard to his Promises, so it notes his steady Faithfulness, whereby having once engaged his Word, he is always constant to it. In this Sense the Truth of God is frequently taken in the
sacred

DISCOURSE XV. 289

facred Writings. And this is that which the Psalmist seems to have principally in View, when he here declares, that *the Truth of the Lord endureth for ever*. Men often break their Word, or fail of their Promise, from various Causes ; but God remembereth his *Word to a thousand Generations*. Psal. cv. 8. The Word that he speaketh *shall come to pass* ; he will *say the Word, and will perform it*. Ezek. xii. 25. All his *Promises are Yea and Amen*. 2 Cor. i. 20.

Finally, Truth belongeth to God, as it signifies an universal Sincerity in his whole Conduct, in all his Actions and Dealings towards his Creatures, remote from all Fraud, Deceit, and Guile. In this Sense we are told, that not only his Words but his Ways are just and true : *Great and marvellous are thy Works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are thy Ways, O thou King of Saints*. Rev. xv. 3.

Having thus enquired what we are to understand by the Truth of God,

I proceed, 2dly, to confirm and illustrate the Psalmist's Observation, that *the Truth of the Lord endureth for ever* ; it is everlasting, and can never fail. And it highly concerneth us to get our Minds fully confirmed and established in a Persuasion of the Truth of God. I shall therefore endea-

your to shew how clearly this may be demonstrated both from the Nature and Reason of the Thing, and from the Testimony of the sacred Writings.

1st, The common Light of Reason and Nature leads us to acknowledge the Truth and Faithfulness of God.

Truth and Fidelity hath an intrinsic Excellency, a Dignity and Beauty in it, that naturally demands and engages our Admiration and Esteem; and on the other Hand, Falshood and Guile is base, deformed, and dishonourable. A Conscioufness of this is deeply implanted in the human Heart: and the more of true Greatness and Generosity there is in any Mind, the stricter Regard and Love it hath for Truth and Sincerity; and the greater Abhorrence and Contempt for Fraud and Falshood. And therefore it is the Voice of Nature, that Falshood is not to be found in God, which we cannot but condemn in our Fellow-creatures, as arguing great Meanness and Baseness, or an ill Disposition of Mind; and that Truth and Fidelity which is so beautiful and excellent, the inseparable Qualification of a great and noble Soul, is to be found in the highest possible Degree of Eminency in the supreme and absolutely perfect Being.

And indeed none of those Things which are the Causes of Falshood and Unfaithfulness

DISCOURSE XV. 291

ness in Men, can possibly have Place in God. For first, it is impossible he should be deceived himself. This evidently follows from the Perfection and Infiniteness of his Understanding, which for ever raiseth him above all Possibility of Mistake or Error. He perfectly knoweth all Things as they really are : he seeth all Things at once by an immediate Intuition ; yea, he knoweth them from everlasting, with a certain and infallible, and all-comprehending Knowledge. He penetrates those Depths that are most mysterious to us. No Proposition or Doctrine hath the least Obscurity to him. No Fact can escape his Notice, nor the least Circumstance attending it. God perfectly knows himself, and therefore knows his own infinite Nature and Perfections, his own Will and Counsels, and Decrees ; and he knows this vast Universe, and all the Orders of Beings in it ; all which he at first created, and continually upholds : particularly he knows his reasonable Creatures, and all their Thoughts, Words, and Actions, with all the Events relating to them ; all which are under the Direction and Disposal of his superintending Providence. And consequently he takes in a full View of the whole Compass of Things ; and therefore it is impossible he should be deceived himself in any Thing he is pleased to reveal.

And he is equally incapable of an Intention to deceive others, as he is of being deceived or mistaken himself. As it is impossible for God to err, so it is impossible for God to lie; because it is inconsistent with the infinite Perfection of his Nature, and Rectitude of his Will. The Strength of *Israel* cannot lie; that most perfect and powerful Being is incapable of such a Weakness, such a Baseness. As he perfectly knoweth all Things, so to declare an Untruth to his Creatures, would be a contradicting his own Nature; it would be, as the Apostle expresseth it, *to deny himself*, which, he justly observes, God cannot do. 2 *Tim.* ii. 13. Man may strive to deceive his Fellow-creatures, with a Design to obtain to himself some Advantage, or to avoid some Evil. He may be tempted to lie by the Influence of his own Hopes or Fears, or by some private selfish Interests and Views, and may have Recourse to Fraud and false Artifice, because he is not able to accomplish his Designs otherwise; all which argues a great deal of Weakness or Corruptions. But God hath nothing to hope or to fear from any other Being whatsoever, no private selfish Interest to pursue; he can never be in want of any Thing, for he is self-sufficient and all-sufficient; nor can a Being of almighty Power and infinite Wisdom
 ever

ever be obliged to have Recourse to Fraud and Falshood, from an Inability of accomplishing his Designs without it. He hath therefore nothing to divert or tempt him from the Paths of Truth. And consequently, if he chooseth to deceive, it must be for deceiving's Sake, and because he preferreth Falshood to Truth, and taketh a Pleasure in making a Mock and Sport of his own Creatures, which would argue such a strange Perverseness of Mind and Will, as cannot possibly be supposed of God, without the highest Absurdity and Contradiction. This would be absolutely inconsistent with all his moral Excellencies, his Holiness, Justice, and Goodness; so that the Arguments that demonstrate these, do equally demonstrate his Veracity.

I add, as a farther Demonstration of God's Faithfulness and Truth, especially as it regards his Promises, that his Counsels and Purposes are immutable; nor can any Thing ever happen to oblige him to alter them, or to hinder him from accomplishing the Things he hath once promised and engaged. Men after having made Promises, often break them, and that either because when they made them they had no Intention of keeping them, or because their Purposes and Resolutions afterwards change, either thro' a Levity and Inconstancy of Mind, or because

they see Reason, as they think, or at least suppose it their Interest to alter them, or finally because some unforeseen Thing happens, which renders them incapable of what they promised and really intended. But none of these Things can be supposed of God. It hath been already shewn, that he could not in making Promises intend only to deceive his Creatures, and amuse them with vain Hopes. Nor is he, like Men, variable in his Purposes and Resolutions. He it is, *the Father of Lights, with whom is no Variableness, nor Shadow of Turning.* Jam. i. 17. He forms all his Purposes, and makes all his Promises with infinite Wisdom, and upon a perfect Foresight of every Thing that could possibly happen. He cannot therefore be ever obliged by any unforeseen Event to change his Purpose and Counsels; and as he is almighty, he can never want Power to accomplish what he hath once promised and decreed.

Taking all these Things together, we have the strongest Evidence of Reason to convince us, that *the Truth of God endureth for ever.*

2dly, Let us consider the express Testimonies of the sacred Writings to this Purpose. There is scarce any one Perfection of the Deity more frequently celebrated in

DISCOURSE XV. 295

the divine Oracles, than his Faithfulness and Truth. God is called a *God of Truth*, Deut. xxxiv. *Isai.* lxxv. 16. the *God that cannot lie*, Tit. i. 2. We are told that his *Words are true*, 2 Sam. vii. 28. and that his *Councils of old are Faithfulness and Truth*, Isa. xxv. 1. He is called *the faithful God, which keepeth Covenant and Mercy with them that love him, and keep his Commandments, to a thousand Generations*. Deut. vii. 9. *For ever, O Lord, thy Word is settled in Heaven*, saith the Psalmist, and *thy Faithfulness unto all Generations*. Psal. cxix. 89, 90. We are told that *Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but his Words shall not pass away*. Matt. xxiv. 35. God himself declares, *My Covenant will I not break, nor alter the Thing that is gone out of my Lips*. Psal. lxxxix. 34. What he saith in a particular Case, is true of every other Instance in which he interposeth his own sacred Word, *I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it*. Isa. xlvi. 11.

Lastly, to add no more, God is said to have *magnified his Word above all his Name*. Psal. cxxxviii. 2. *i. e.* he hath eminently displayed his Faithfulness and Truth, with a distinguishing Lustre and Glory above his other Attributes. And not only do the Scriptures assert and celebrate this Attribute of the Truth or Faithfulness of God, but

296 DISCOURSE XV.

they exemplify it to us in the Accomplishment of many wonderful Predictions and Promises, of which we there have an Account; and which, tho' perhaps seeming very unlikely when they were first made, yet were afterwards signally and most punctually fulfilled. Such were the Promises and Predictions made to *Abraham*, that his Wife *Sarah*, who had been always barren, should have a Son by him in her old Age, at a Time when by the Course of Nature it seemed impossible, and that his Posterity should inherit the Land of *Canaan*, in which he was a Stranger and Sojourner; but that first they should be afflicted and in Bondage, and afterwards God would judge that Nation whom they had served, and they should come out with great Substance, and in the fourth Generation should return to the promised Land. All which was literally accomplished. And afterwards the most remarkable Events that happened from Time to Time, with regard to God's ancient Church and People *Israel*, were distinctly foretold. Many of the Predictions recorded in Scripture are remarkably plain and circumstantial, tho' uttered long before the Events they related to came to pass. Of this Kind is that of which we have Account, 1 *Kings* xiii. 2.—6. that a Child should be born unto the House of *David*, *Josiah* by Name,

DISCOURSE XV. 297

Name, who should destroy the Altar *Jero-boam* had erected at *Bethel*, and strew dead Mens Bones upon it to pollute it; and this foretold above 300 Years before it happened. Such also was the Prophet *Isaiab's* foretelling the Victories and Conquests of *Cyrus* by Name, and his letting go the Captives of *Judab* not for Price or Reward; and this near 200 Years before it came to pass. *Isa.* xlv. 1. v. 13. When *Sennackerib* came before *Jerusalem* with a mighty Army, and threatened utter Destruction to it, and there was no human Power to oppose him, it was foretold, contrary to all Appearance, that he should return with Disgrace to his own Land. *Isa.* xxxvii. The Destruction of *Jerusalem* by the King of *Babylon*, and the carrying of the royal Family of *Judab* Captives thither, was plainly foretold, when there was little Likelihood of any such Thing, above 100 Years before it happened. *Isa.* xxxix. 6, 7. So was also the subverting of the *Babylonish* Empire by the *Medes* and *Persians*, and the taking of the City of *Babylon*, and the utter Desolation to which at length it should be reduced. *Isa.* xiv. 21. *Jer.* 1. It was plainly foretold, that the Land of *Judea* should remain desolate, and the People should continue in Captivity 70 Years, and that at the End of that fixed Time they should be restored to their
own

298 DISCOURSE XV.

own Country again. The Prophecies in the Book of *Daniel* are particularly remarkable. They take in the Fates of many different Nations for a long Series of Years, the Succession of four mighty Empires, and the principal Revolutions that were to befall them ; particularly the overturning the *Persian* Empire by *Alexander* the Great, and the Division of his Empire after his Death into four Kingdoms ; the profaning the Temple, and the Miseries brought upon the *Jews* by *Antiochus Epiphanes*, as well as the final Destruction of the *Jewish* State, of the City and Sanctuary, by the *Romans*. But especially the Prophecies and Predictions relating to the Messiah that was to come, exhibit a glorious Display of the invariable Truth and Faithfulness of God. Here we have a wonderful Series of remarkable Prophecies, carried on from the Beginning thro' a long Succession of Ages, concerning the great Redeemer that was to come. His Person was pointed out by many remarkable Characters, as was the Time of his coming. The Nation, Tribe, and Family from which he was to proceed ; the Place of his Birth ; his being born of a Virgin ; the Dignity of his Person, and yet the Meanness of his humbled State ; the illustrious Miracles he performed ; the grievous Sufferings and Death

DISCOURSE XV. 299

to which he submitted for the Sins of the World; together with some of the humiliating Circumstances that attended those Sufferings, and the Glories that followed them; his Resurrection from the dead, and sitting at the right Hand of the Majesty on high; his universal Dominion; that great Salvation of which he was to be the Author; the plentiful Effusion of the Holy Ghost: all these Things were promised and foretold many Ages before they happened. To which we may add, the Predictions concerning the general Diffusion of the Gospel, the calling of the Gentiles, the subverting of the *Jewish* Polity, and the introducing a new Dispensation instead of that of *Moses*. These and many other Things to the like Purpose were foretold at sundry Times, and in divers Manners, when there was not the least Prospect of such Events, and they have all been remarkably fulfilled, which shews that God is faithful that hath promised. Thus do the holy Scriptures give many glorious Attestations to the Truth and Faithfulness of God, that it endureth throughout all Generations.

If any Promises seem to have been made, or Threatnings denounced, which yet were not actually accomplished, we must consider that they were conditional, and so upon the dropping of the Condition they fell

300 DISCOURSE XV.

fell of course. Thus *Nineveh* was to be destroyed within 40 Days. *Jonah* was commissioned to declare it to the *Ninevites*. But here there was a Condition implied, tho' not directly expressed, *viz.* that they were to be destroyed if they did not repent. So the *Ninevites* themselves understood it; and accordingly upon their humbling themselves before God, and repenting of their evil Ways, the threatned Punishment was averted. We may apply this to other Cases. When any Promises seem not to have been performed, or Threatnings not executed, 'tis not as if God were not faithful and true to his own Word, but because the Conditions on which those Promises or Threatnings were suspended, were not fulfilled. There is a general Rule laid down, by which such Promises and Threatnings are to be understood, *Jer.* xviii. 7, 8, 9, 10.

At what Instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: If that Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what Instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to build and to plant it: If it do Evil in my Sight, that it obey not my Voice, then I will repent of the Good wherewith I said I would benefit them.

This

DISCOURSE XV. 301

This is the ordinary stated Rule of the divine Procedure ; and his altering his Dealings towards Nations or particular Persons, when done according to this Rule, is so far from being an Impeachment of his Faithfulness and Truth, that it is rather a Confirmation of it. I need not tell you, that when repenting is in this and other Passages of Scripture ascribed to God, it cannot be understood properly to signify any Mutability in his Counsels or Purposes. For *he is not a Man that he should lie, nor the Son of Man that he should repent.* Numb. xxiii. 19. But it is only spoken after the manner of Men, to signify a Change of his outward Dealings towards a People, from a Way of Mercy to that of Judgment, or the contrary ; which very Change was what he perfectly foresaw, and resolved upon from the Beginning, and therefore made a Part of the divine Scheme and Counsels, conformably to the established Rules of his providential Government.

Thus have I endeavoured to illustrate the Observation of the Psalmist, that *the Truth of the Lord endureth for ever* ; it is everlasting, and can never fail.

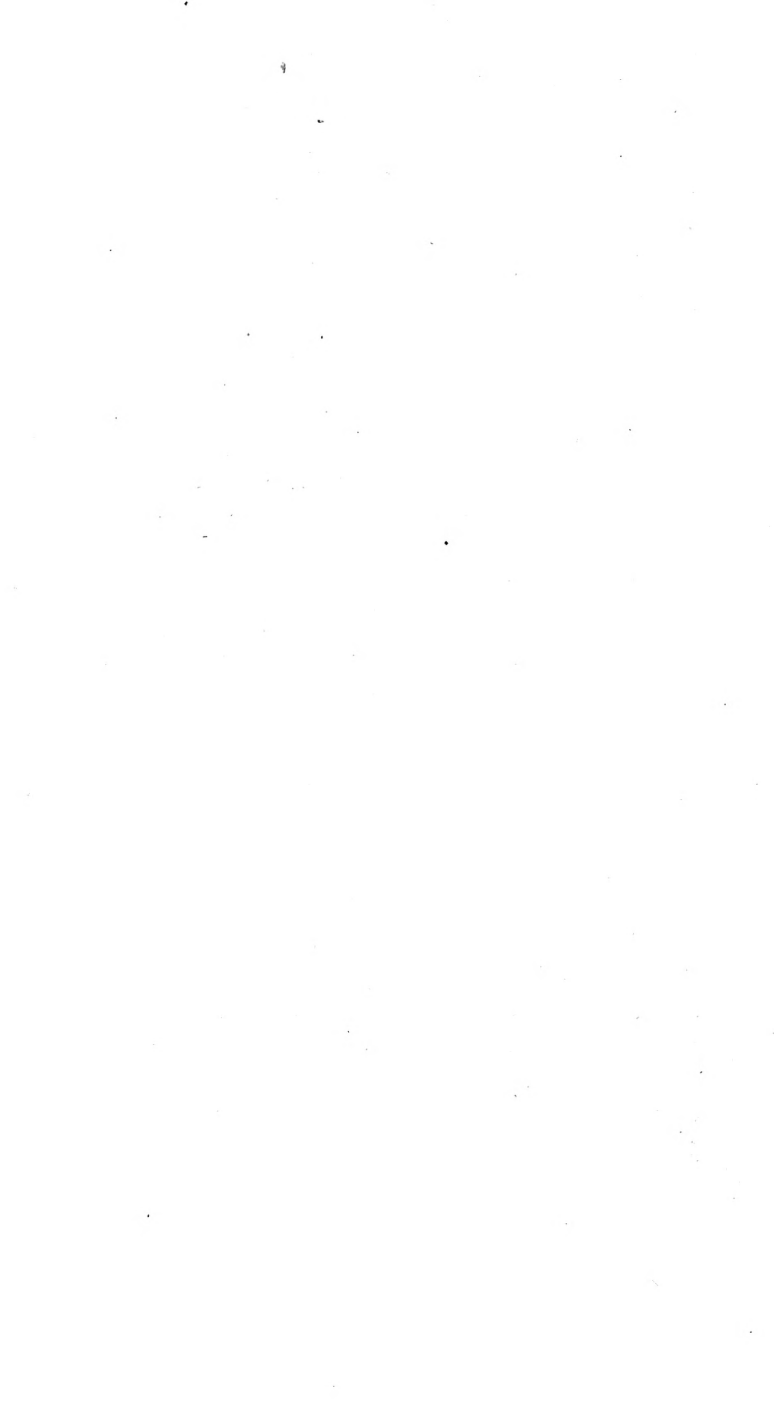
And now how glorious and venerable should God be in our Esteem, as vested with this Character ! If we cannot but approve and admire Truth and Sincerity as

302 DISCOURSE XV.

far as it is to be found among Men, who would not admire him, who is the supreme, the infinite Truth, and celebrate his Word which he hath magnified above all his Name! His Faithfulness we are told reacheth unto the Clouds ; thither let our Praises ascend. Here in the Text all Nations are called upon to join, as it were, in an universal Comfort, to praise the Lord, giving him the Glory of this Attribute, that his *Truth endureth for ever*. In like manner, *Psal. c. 4, 5.* we are called upon to be thankful to the Lord, and to bless his Name, because *his Mercy is everlasting, and his Truth endureth throughtout all Generations*. In what exalted Strains doth the Psalmist celebrate and adore this divine Perfection in the 89th Psalm! He begins with declaring, *I will sing of the Mercies of the Lord for ever ; with my Mouth will I make known thy Faithfulness to all Generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever ; thy Faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very Heavens.* Ver. 1, 2. ; and again, Ver. 5. *The Heavens shall praise thy Wonders, O Lord ; thy Faithfulness also in the Congregation of the Saints.* And at length he breaks forth into that rapturous Exclamation, Ver. 8. *O Lord God of Hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? or to thy Faithfulness round about thee?* And if the Saints under the old Testament were so full
of

DISCOURSE XV. 303

of the Praises of the Faithfulness and Truth of God, much more should we be so, who have seen the Accomplishment of those glorious Promises, which they only lived in the Hope and Expectation of. This is an Attribute that particularly shines forth with an amiable Glory in the Face of our Lord *Jesus Christ*; who is in this respect the Image of the invisible Deity. He is full of Grace and Truth, the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, in whom all the Promises of God are Yea and Amen. What the *Israelites* were obliged to own, concerning God's Faithfulness in his Promises, relating to their Possession of the earthly *Canaan*, may yet with greater Justice be applied to the Promises relating to the Messiah, and that great Salvation of which he is the glorious Author: *There hath failed not ought of any good Thing which the Lord hath spoken; all came to pass.* Josh. xxi. 45. Let our Souls therefore bless the Lord, let us extol his Name together, and make his Truth the Subject of our thankful Praises. I add, that the Consideration of this glorious Attribute may furnish many Reflections that may be of Use to us for regulating our Conduct, as I shall shew in my next Discourse.



*On the Truth and Faithfulness of
God.*

DISCOURSE XVI.

PSALM cxvii. 2.

The Truth of the Lord endureth for ever.

I Propofed thefe Words to your Confideration the laft Opportunity. And for illustrating them, I firft endeavoured to ftate the Notion of the Truth of the Lord here mentioned, and to fhew what we are to underftand by it. And then I proceeded to demonftrate, both from Reason and Scripture, the Everlaftingnefs and Stability of the Truth and Faithfulness of God, that it endureth for ever, and can never fail.

[VOL. I.]

X

This

306 DISCOURSE XVI.

This Subject may furnish several important Reflections that may be of great Use to us for the Regulation of our Temper and Conduct.

And ist, Doth the Truth of the Lord endure for ever? how unlike are those to God who indulge themselves in Lying, Falshood, and Deceit! Since God is infinite Truth, nothing can be more contrary to him than a Lie. How often doth he in Scripture declare his Abhorrence of it in the strongest Terms! When Idols are represented under the most contemptible and odious Character, they are called Lies, and lying Vanities. Lying Lips are said to be an Abomination unto the Lord.

I shall not at present insist upon the ill Effects that Lying and Falshood bring upon human Society, the Tendency it hath to destroy all Faith and mutual Confidence among Men, and to sow endless Jealousies and Suspicions; that it is the Parent of Slander and Reproach, and creates Enmity, Discord, and innumerable Mischiefs; but what I shall at present observe, and what my Subject directly leads me to, is, its absolute Contrariety to the Nature and Will of God, to that which he esteems his Glory, his Faithfulness and Truth. A Lie is represented as the deformed Character and Progeny of *Satan*, that impure Spirit,

DISCOURSE XVI. 307

Spirit, the Enemy of God and of Mankind, and of all that is good. It is said of him by our blessed Lord, *John viii. 44.* that *there is no Truth in him : when he speaketh a Lie, he speaketh of his own ; for he is a Liar, and the Father of it.* So that all habitual Liars may be regarded as *Satan's Children* ; they bear his Image and not God's. Can it therefore be expected that God should take any Delight or Complacency in them or in their Services ? What Communion can there be between infinite Truth and him that loveth and maketh a Lie ? Heaven will spue such Creatures out ; for nothing but eternal Truth and Sincerity dwells there. A known habitual Liar is despised on Earth, and Men of Integrity and true Honour are loth to keep Company with such an one, much less shall Persons of this Temper and Character be admitted to the Society of Angels and blessed Saints in Heaven. They shall be thrust down into Company fitter for them, and whom they more nearly resemble, that is, the Devil, who is a Liar from the Beginning, and the Father of Lies, and his Angels, who are called lying Spirits. Hence in that black Catalogue of those that *shall have their Portion in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone,* Liars are particularly mentioned. *Rev. xxi. 8.* And yet it must be

308 DISCOURSE XVI.

owned that Lying and Falshood is a Thing to which our Natures in their present degenerate and corrupt State are particularly prone. Though we are conscious that it hath a Vileness and Baseness in it, and it hath been ever accounted a mean and dishonourable Thing, unworthy of a great and noble Mind; though an habitual Liar hath been an infamous Character in all Ages, so that those that pretend to any Sense of Honour can almost bear any Reproach rather than this, and esteem it the highest Indignity to be charged with a Lie; yet notwithstanding this it is evident, that there is scarce any Vice more common than this. When it is said that *God is not a Man that he should lie*, Numb. xxiii. 19. it seems plainly implied, that Man is a Creature prone to Lying and Falshood. The Apostle, when he sets himself to shew that *Jews and Gentiles* were all under Sin, brings this as a general Charge against them, that *with their Tongues they have used Deceit*. Rom. iii. 13. And the Psalmist observes concerning the wicked, that *they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking Lies*. Indeed there is an observable Proneness to this in Children, and which is apt to grow up with them from their Infancy, and therefore needs to be very early checked and restrained. *The Heart of Man* is said to be

DISCOURSE XVI. 309

be *deceitful above all Things*. Jer. xvii. 9. And this Deceitfulness diffuseth itself through the Words and Actions. It highly concerneth us, therefore, to guard against all Falshood, and Deceit, and Guile, and earnestly to aspire after a nearer Conformity to God in his Faithfulness and Truth. We must endeavour to maintain and preserve a strict Regard to Truth, both in our Transactions with God, and in our Converses with our Fellow-creatures.

Ist, Let us endeavour to maintain a sacred Regard to Truth in our more immediate Transactions with the Deity. God is all Truth and Faithfulness in his Promises and Dealings towards us; we should therefore endeavour to be true in our religious Professions, and in our Promises of Duty to him. There is scarce any Thing more odious to God than Hypocrisy. The whole Life of the Hypocrite is as it were one solemn Lie. He puts on an Appearance of Religion and Devotion when he is utterly destitute of the Truth and Reality of it. The Prayers of the wicked are said to be an Abomination unto the Lord, because their very Prayers are Lies; they come before God with a suppliant external Gesture, and make solemn Professions of Duty and Allegiance; they profess their earnest Desires of his gracious Assistances, and

310 DISCOURSE XVI.

their Resolutions of abandoning their corrupt Lusts, when all the while their Hearts are far from him; they are only lying to him with their Lips, as he complains of his professing People of old. Let us therefore earnestly guard against this, and make it our great Care to get our Hearts cleansed from reigning Hypocrisy and Guile. Let us be earnest in our Addresses to the Throne of Grace, that he who loveth Truth in the inward Parts, would by his Spirit form us to that amiable Sincerity which is so pleasing in his Sight; that he would so cause us to learn the Truth, as it is in *Jesus*, that we may *put off the old Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts, and may be renewed in the Spirit of our Minds, and put on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness*, or, as the Words run in the Original, ‘Holiness of Truth.’ *Ephes. iv. 22, 23, 24.* Let us not content ourselves with a mere Form of Godliness without the Power of it. Let us worship God not merely in outward Shew, but in Spirit and in Truth, as our Saviour expresseth it; and see that in the Prayers, the Thanksgivings, and Adorations we offer to the divine Majesty, our Words be expressive of the real inward Thoughts, Affections, and Desires of our Hearts. When

we

DISCOURSE XVI. 311

we take up Resolutions as in the Presence of God, and bind our Souls to him with solemn Vows, we must be careful to perform and fulfil those Vows, and must exercise a continual Watch over ourselves, that our Hearts may not turn aside, and that we be not unstedfast in the Covenant of our God. Having opened our Mouths unto the Lord, we must not entertain a Thought of going back from it.

2dly, We must also maintain a strict Regard to Truth in our Converses with our Fellow-creatures. In our Dealings and Traffick we must be just and true, above the little mean Arts of Tricking and Falshood, that are so common among those that are carried away by an eager Desire of Gain: we must be constant and faithful to our Words and Promises, and use ourselves to be so even in smaller Matters; for those that allow themselves to break their Words in Trifles, will be in great Danger of doing so in Things of greater Importance. In our whole Conversations let us be governed by a Love of Truth, and keep at the remotest Distance from whatever borders upon a Lie. It is observed concerning that excellent Heathen *Epaminondas*, one of the most admired Characters in all Antiquity, that he had such a Regard to Truth that he would not utter a Falshood, no not even in Jest. And indeed those that accustom themselves

312 DISCOURSE XVI.

to say Things which they know to be false in a Way of Jest and Merriment, will by Degrees lose all Reverence for Truth, and have little Regard for it even in serious Matters. It is given as the Character of the Man that shall abide in the Tabernacle of God, and dwell in his holy Hill, that he walketh uprightly, and worketh Righteousness, and speaketh the Truth in his Heart; and that he sweareth, or promiseth to his own Hurt, and changeth not. He keepeth his Promise even where it seems to be contrary to his Interest. *Psal. xv. 2, 4.* We are commanded to speak *the Truth in Love*, that we may grow up into him in all Things, which is the Head, even Christ. *Ephes. iv. 15.* And in the 25th of the same Chapter we are exhorted to put away Lying, and to speak every Man Truth unto his Neighbour; for we are Members one of another. No Consideration either of Fear or worldly Advantage should tempt us to deliberate Lying; nothing can excuse it, and it always heightens the Crime that it endeavours to conceal. How amiable is the Character that is given of *Nathanael*, that he was an *Israelite indeed, in whom there is no Guile.* *John. i. 47.* This must be our Character if we would approve ourselves real Christians, the Disciples of the holy *Jesus*, all whose Words are faithful and true, and the Children

DISCOURSE XVI. 313

dren of that God that cannot lie, and who keepeth Truth for ever. By this we shall adorn the Profession we make of Religion, as by a contrary Conduct we shall bring a Stain and Reproach upon it.

I now come to the second main Use I would direct you to make of this Subject; and that is, that we should improve the Consideration of *the Truth and Faithfulness of God*, as laying a solid Foundation for a Life of Faith. The Apostle Paul speaking in his own Name, and in that of all sincere Christians, saith, *we walk by Faith, and not by Sight*. And it is declared, that *the just shall live by Faith*. Now Faith (as I hinted in my former Discourse) hath the Truth of God for its Object. In order therefore to our living a Life of Faith, we must first get it fixed upon our Hearts as a stable Principle, an absolute Dependence. Let us resign ourselves entirely to its Conduct, believing all the Doctrines that are there revealed, and relying on the Promises that are there given us, and looking for the Accomplishment of the Predictions that are there made. In doing this we shall live that Life of Faith which is so becoming Christians, and shall shew a due Regard to this glorious Attribute of God, that *Truth of the Lord which endureth for ever*.

314 DISCOURSE XVI.

1st, We must shew our Faith in God, and our just Regard to his Truth, by believing the Doctrines he revealeth in his holy Word, even those that are most difficult to be comprehended by us. Many of those Things which natural Reason, if duly improved, would lead us to acknowledge, are in the Gospel Revelation more amply confirmed, and set in a clearer Light. Besides which, there are several Things there revealed which our unassisted Reason could not have discovered, at least with any Certainty. Such, in general, are the Doctrines relating to the wonderful Methods of our Redemption and Salvation through *Jesus Christ*, the Doctrine of the holy and ever-blessed Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Satisfaction he hath offered for the Sins of the World, the new Covenant founded in his Blood, his perpetual Intercession for us in Heaven, and the universal Dominion he is invested with as Mediator, his coming in great Glory to judge the World at the great Day, the Resurrection of the Body, and the wonderful Change that shall then pass upon it, &c. Some of these Things depended upon the wise and free Counsels and Purposes of God, which we could not have known if he had not thought fit to reveal them to us; and others of them relate to Things
very

DISCOURSE XVI. 315

very mysterious in themselves, and which are attended with Difficulties which we are not well able to explain, and which puzzle and astonish our feeble Minds. But this should not shock our Faith, nor hinder us from yielding an Assent to those Doctrines, when we have Reason to think that God hath taught them to us in his Word. It is a Homage which the human Intellect owes to God, to believe whatsoever he reveals, though relating to Matters which exceed our Comprehension. A noble and an acceptable Instance of Self-denial it is in such Cases to submit our Understandings to the Obedience of Faith, and to resign ourselves wholly up to the Guidance of infinite Truth, subduing the Pride and Petulancy of our own presumptuous Minds, which, though often puzzled to account for Things which seem to be most plain and obvious, are yet for pretending to grasp Infinity itself. And this submitting ourselves to the Conduct of divine Revelation doth no more intrench upon the Liberty of the Understanding, or that Freedom of Thought which is the Glory and Privilege of our Natures, than the keeping the Appetites within the just Boundaries of good and equal Laws intrenches upon the Freedom of the Will. Does not Reason and our own Experience convince us, on the one Hand,
that

316 DISCOURSE XVI.

that our Capacities are finite and limited ; that there are many Things most certainly true which we are not able to explain or to account for ; and that consequently it is no sufficient Objection against the Truth of a Thing, that we cannot distinctly conceive or explain the Manner how it is ? And, on the other Hand, doth not Reason assure us, that God is a Being of infinite Wisdom and Knowledge, who cannot be deceived himself, and of infinite Goodness and Veracity, who will not deceive his Creatures ; that consequently, in any Matter whatsoever it is a sufficient Ground for our believing it, that God himself hath revealed it. After having therefore once got it fully confirmed to our Minds, that the Scriptures are the Word of God, all that remains with respect to particular Doctrines, is, to enquire whether such and such Doctrines be contained there, and if they be, we should receive them with a firm and unshaken Assent, without Doubt or Wavering. When we receive any Doctrine merely upon the Credit of frail and fallible Men, we may well entertain Suspicions and Doubts concerning it. For Men are capable of an Intention to deceive us, or if they be honest, and have never so good Intention, their Honesty is no Security to us, since the best and honestest of
Men

DISCOURSE XVI. 317

Men may be mistaken in their Notions and Reasonings, and whether Men design to deceive me or not, it is necessary for me to be upon my Guard, if they may deceive without designing it. But when we rely upon a divine Testimony, our Faith is fixed upon a solid Foundation. Whatever Difficulties attend the Doctrine that is revealed, if we are convinced that God hath revealed it, our Uncertainties are at an End. And what a Satisfaction must it needs be to a generous Soul that is inflamed with the Love of Truth, that we are not left to wander without a Guide in the Mazes of Ignorance and Error, but amidst the many Uncertainties that surround us, here is something in which we may securely acquiesce, even that Word of God which is more stable than Heaven and Earth! Can we ever be sufficiently thankful to God, that he hath given us his holy Word to be a Lamp to our Feet, and a Light unto our Path? that we have infallible Truth to be our Guide, by the Help of which the meanest sincere Christians have a more certain Knowledge of many Things that are of great Importance than the most sagacious of the Pagan Philosophers? Let us therefore, with a divine Satisfaction and Repose of Soul, rely on the Discoveries God hath made to us in his Word, and embrace

318 DISCOURSE XVI.

embrace with an unshaken Assent all the Doctrines that are there revealed. This is one remarkable Instance in which our Faith must shew itself, and by which we must manifest our Regard to this Attribute of God, *his Truth and Veracity which endureth for ever.*

2dly, As we must believe the Doctrines, so we must trust the Predictions relating to grand and important Events that are yet future, as well as there have been many Predictions in the Word of God that have already received their full Accomplishments; and the Fulfilment of those that are now past should strengthen our Faith with respect to those that are yet to come. Thus *e. g.* the Rejection of God's ancient People the *Jews*, and the Calling of the *Gentiles*; the Destruction of *Jerusalem* and the Temple, and the *Jews* being dispersed all over the Earth, and still preserved a distinct People, were plainly foretold; and as these Predictions have been evidently fulfilled, so we may justly please ourselves with the Hopes of the Accomplishment of those Predictions that relate to the Conversion of the *Jews* in the latter Days, and the bringing in the Fulness of the *Gentiles*. Again, it is expressly foretold, that there should be a falling away from the Christian Faith, and under the Name of mystical *Babylon*, an extraordinary idolatrous, antichristian Power

DISCOURSE XVI. 319

is foretold in the Christian Church, which under the Veil of Religion should deceive the Nations, and raise the most cruel Persecutions against *Christ's* faithful Servants; and that the Seat of it should be in the City which reigned over the Kings of the Earth at the Time when the Prophecy was given, which was the City of *Rome*: and as we have seen this remarkably fulfilled, so we have Reason to look for the Accomplishment of that Part of the Prediction that yet remains to be fulfilled, relating to the Destruction of the mystical *Babylon*, and a more flourishing State of the Christian Church than has yet appeared.

Again, When we behold the remarkable Predictions relating to *Christ's* first coming, his Miracles, Sufferings, Death, Resurrection, as having been so exactly fulfilled, tho' foretold several Ages before they came to pass, this should help to strengthen our Faith with respect to those Predictions that relate to his second glorious Appearance, when he shall come to raise the dead, to judge the World, to inflict Vengeance on the obstinately wicked and presumptuous Sinners, and to compleat the Salvation of the righteous. Faith depending on the un-failing Truth of God should so realize these great Events, in all their Certainty and Importance, as to give them a kind of present Subsistence

320 DISCOURSE XVI.

Subsistence to our Minds. Hence Truth is said to be *the Substance of Things hoped for*, and *the Evidence of Things not seen*. Heb. xi. 1. Let not the Distance of these Events, or the seeming Delay of their Accomplishment, weaken our Belief of them, knowing that the Lord is not slack concerning his Promise (as some Men count Slackness,) but will fulfil what he hath promised and foretold, in that Season that seemeth most fit to his infinite Wisdom. Nor let the Difficulties that may seem to lie in the Way of their Accomplishment, discourage us; for all these Difficulties fly before the Power of an Almighty God. In such Cases we should imitate faithful *Abraham*, who, in a Case of great Difficulty, and seemingly impossible, *against Hope believed in Hope, and staggered not at the Promise of God through Unbelief; but was strong in Faith, giving Glory to God, being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform*. Rom. iv. 18, 20, 21. And as we should look for the Accomplishment of the Predictions contained in the holy Scriptures, so we should often consider the Promises that are there made for the Support and Consolation of the People of God. And we should shew our Regard to the Truth and Faithfulness of God, by trusting in these Promises, and applying them to our own Use, amidst
the

DISCOURSE XVI. 321

the many Difficulties and Discouragements we must expect to encounter with, in this State of Trial. And the greater those Difficulties are, the more should the Eminency of our Faith appear. Thus, *e. g.* Are we chastened with sore and grievous Afflictions? let us rely on the Declarations made in the Word of God, that all Things shall work together for Good to them that love his Name; and that tho' no Affliction be for the present joyous, but grievous, yet it shall bring forth the peaceable Fruit of Righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. *Rom. viii. 28. Heb. xii.* Are we left destitute of worldly Friends and Supports, and forsaken by such on whom we most depended? let us place our steady Confidence in him who hath said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Heb. xiii. 5.* Are we in Wants and Straits, and perplexed with anxious Cares, what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed? let us exercise Faith in the Promises of God, remembering that it is declared in his Word, *Trust in the Lord, and do Good, so shalt thou dwell in the Land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Psal. xxxvii. 3.* And again, it is promised concerning him *that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly, that Bread shall be given him, and his Waters shall be sure. Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16.* *Seek ye first the Kingdom*

322 DISCOURSE XVI.

of God, faith our Saviour, and his Righteousness, and all these Things, i. e. the Things of this present World, as far as they are really good and needful, shall be added unto you. Matth. vi. 33. Are we assaulted by Satan, and by violent Temptations? let us rely on the Faithfulness of him who hath said, *My Grace is sufficient for thee*; and who hath promised, *not to suffer us to be tempted above that we are able*; but that *he will with the Temptation also make a Way to escape, that we may be able also to bear it.* 1 Cor. x. 13. 2 Cor. xii. Are we ready to sink under a Sense of our Guilt, the Numbers and Aggravations of our Offences, and to think that there is no Hope, and that our Iniquities are too great to be forgiven? let us exercise Faith on those Promises of God, whereby he hath engaged to receive the greatest of Sinners to Mercy, upon their sincere Repentance; and that in that Case, tho' their Sins have been as Scarlet, they shall be white as Snow; tho' they have been red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool.

Thus when we are pressed down with Burdens of any Kind, we should by Faith cast our Burdens upon the Lord, waiting upon him in a persevering Dependence upon his Promises. This it is to live by Faith; and to engage you to this, consider,

1st,

DISCOURSE XVI. 323

1st, That such a Life of Faith will be peculiarly pleasing to God, and will tend to glorify him in the World. Hereby we shall give God the Glory of his Faithfulness and Truth, which he so highly delights in, and by which he so often describes himself in the sacred Writings; and not only of this, but of his Goodness, his Wisdom, his Power, and All-sufficiency. Thus we are told, that *Abraham* being strong in Faith, gave Glory to God; see the Passage I mentioned before, *Rom. iv.* and accordingly his believing in God was imputed unto him for Righteousness.

2dly, Such a Life of Faith as it will be highly pleasing to God, so it will be very comfortable to ourselves. We shall then have Support in every Circumstance, and be kept from sinking under the greatest Difficulties, and be strengthened with Might in the inner Man. And finally, we shall be prepared for Heaven itself, where Faith shall be turned into Vision, and Hope into everlasting Enjoyment.

On the Unchangeableness of God.

DISCOURSE XVII.

JAMES i. 17.

Every good Gift, and every perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning.

IT is the latter Part of the Words that I shall particularly insist upon, *With whom is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning.*

It is one great Excellency of the sacred Writings, that they every where abound with the noblest Descriptions of the Supreme Being, such as tend to fill us with the most admiring Thoughts of him, and

326 DISCOURSE XVII.

to produce in us suitable devout Affections and Dispositions towards him. He is every where represented as most amiable and most venerable, worthy of our highest Love, and of our profoundest Veneration and Esteem. Great Care is taken to guard M against entertaining any unworthy Conceptions of the Deity, unbecoming his glorious Greatness, his Goodness, and Purity. We are there taught to take the Blame of all the Evils we are guilty of wholly to ourselves, and to give God the Glory of the Good that is in us, or that we are enabled to perform. To this Purpose St. *James* here declares, Ver. 13. *Let no Man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any Man.* And then he adds, Ver. 17. *Every good Gift, and every perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning.* How amiable is God, considered as the great Fountain and Author of all Good! But tho' he were most kind and beneficent, as earthly Princes sometimes are in their imperfect Measure and Degree, yet if like them he were variable and inconstant, he could not be safely depended on. But when we consider, that he is good and kind, so he is always the same, unchangeable in his Being, in his Perfections,

DISCOURSE XVII. 327

Perfections, and in his Purposes; this tendeth greatly to heighten our Esteem of him, and rendereth him the proper Object of our Love, Admiration, and Affiance.

God is here called *the Father of Lights*, in Allusion, as some suppose, to that glorious Luminary the Sun, the great Fountain of Light and vital Warmth to this lower World, which may exhibit an imperfect Resemblance of the diffusive Goodness and Benignity, the unutterable Splendor and Glory of the supreme Lord of the Universe. And the Allusion seems to be still carrying on, when it is here declared concerning God, that with him *is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning*. For the Critics observe, that the Expressions in the Original are the same that are used by Astronomers to denote the Changes and Variations that happen to the heavenly Bodies. Those glorious Orbs put on different Aspects; they are in themselves mutable, and at length liable to a total Dissolution; but God is not subject to the least Variation. With him is not so much as a *Shadow of Turning*, as the Apostle here most emphatically expresseth it. He is, from everlasting to everlasting, the same immutably perfect, the same most amiable and beneficent Being, the eternal indeficient Source of Glory and Happiness. This is a mighty Conso-

328 DISCOURSE XVII.

lation, and a just Ground of Confidence and Joy.

This Immutability of the Supreme Being is what I now propose to consider; and in treating of this Subject, I would observe,

First, That God is unchangeable in his Being and Perfections.

Secondly, He is unchangeable in his Counsels and Purposes.

Thirdly, He is unchangeable in his Ways of Procedure, and Methods of acting.

First, God is unchangeable in his Being and Perfections. This is one Thing that seems to be intended in that glorious Character by which he describeth himself, *I am that I am*. The same Thing is signified by the Name *Jehovah*, which is appropriated to him in the sacred Writings, and which leadeth us to consider him as the eternal self-existent Being. All other Things are contingent; they do not exist necessarily of themselves, but owe their Existence to the Power and Will of the Cause that produced them; and therefore it implieth no Contradiction to suppose them never to have existed at all, or to suppose them to cease to be, or to be liable to Change, and different from what they now are. But the original and most fundamental Notion we can form of God, is, that he is absolutely eternal, that he derived not his Being from any external

nal

DISCOURSE XVII. 329

nal Cause, but existeth necessarily of himself from everlasting; and it is manifest that that which existeth necessarily, cannot be any other than what it is, and consequently must be unchangeable in its Being.

Again, That God is unchangeable in his Being or Essence farther appeareth, if we consider, that if his Essence be subject to Change, it must be owing either to an internal Weakness and Defect in its own Nature, or to the Power and Agency of some external Cause. To suppose any internal Weakness or Defect in the absolutely perfect Being, were a manifest Inconsistency; and it were equally absurd to imagine that the eternal and self-existent Jehovah, who derived not his Being from any thing without him, should be so far subject to the Power of any external Cause, as to have a Change thereby produced in his Nature or Essence.

And if God be unchangeable in his Essence, he is so in his Perfections and Attributes, which are not really distinct from his Essence. Whatever Excellencies we may suppose to belong to any created Being, they are still capable of being increased or diminished, and consequently of being changed from what they now are. The most glorious Angels may be raised to higher Degrees of Perfection and Excellence than they

330 DISCOURSE XVII.

they have yet attained to. And on the other Hand it is possible in the Nature of Things, that they may fall from their Holiness, their Goodness, their Purity, whilst they will retain their Beings ; because these Qualities are, in the Nature of the Thing, separable from their Essence, as appears by the Instance of the evil Angels. But with regard to God, who is essentially most powerful, most wise, most good ; he can no more suffer the least Alteration in any of these his adorable Properties, than in his very Being or Essence ; for they constitute his Essence, and are inseparable from it. They are, as his Essence, infinite and eternal, not capable of receiving any Accession, or suffering any Diminution. He can never grow more perfect than he always is, because he is, from everlasting to everlasting, absolutely and infinitely perfect, and nothing can be added to infinite Perfection. Nor can he ever be rendered less perfect than he is. His Power can never be weakened, nor his Understanding and Wisdom be ever impaired, nor his Goodness, and the Purity and Rectitude of his Nature and Will, ever be diminished. He is always equally powerful and wise, holy, just, and good, and is for ever raised by the essential Excellency of his Nature above all Possibility of being tempted to moral Evil.

Secondly,

DISCOURSE XVII. 331

Secondly, God is without Variableness, not only in his Being and Perfections, but in his Councils and Purposes. We read of *the Immutability of his Counsel*. Heb. vi. 17. And this is frequently and very significantly represented to us in the sacred Writings. Thus it is declared, *Psal. xxxiii. 11.* that *the Counsel of the Lord standeth forever, and the Thoughts of his Heart unto all Generations*. The Wise-man observes, that *there are many Devices in a Man's Heart; nevertheless the Counsel of the Lord, that shall stand*. Prov. xix. 21. God himself is introduced as declaring with great Solemnity, *Isa. xlv. 9, 10.* *I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the End from the Beginning, and from ancient Times the Things that are not yet done, saying, My Counsel shall stand, and I will do all my Pleasure*. And again, Ver. 11. *I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it*. Men often alter their Purposes and Counsels, either because they were at first rash and ill concerted, taken up in a sudden Heat, and without due Deliberation; or because, though their Purposes were formed upon mature Consideration, yet through the Imperfection of human Understanding, they did not take in a full View of Things; something or other escaped them which it would

332 DISCOURSE XVII.

would have been proper for them to have considered ; or Things may fall out quite contrary to all Appearance and Probability, and which it was not possible for them to foresee, and against which therefore they could not provide ; and this may lay them under a Necessity to alter their Schemes, or after having well concerted their Designs, they may want Power to put them in Execution ; or lastly, they may change their Purposes from an unaccountable Levity and Inconstancy of Mind, and a Variableness of Humour, to which Men, and even those in the greatest Eminency of Station and Power, are often subject, or through the Prevalency of some Passion, or a View to some worldly Interest, which they apprehend may be better served by altering their first Purposes. But none of these Things can possibly have Place in God. He perfectly knoweth all Things from everlasting. The whole Compass of Possibilities, and the entire Scheme of future Events ; every Thing that can happen, or that shall come to pass, lies always open to his all-comprehending Mind. And he perfectly knoweth what is best and fittest to be done in every possible Circumstance of Things. Nothing therefore can ever happen to make him alter his Purposes, because nothing can ever happen which he did not foresee from the Beginning. And what he hath most wisely designed, he can never
want

DISCOURSE XVII. 333

want Power to execute. For to him all Things are possible. And he *worketh all Things according to the Counsel of his own Will*, as the Apostle expresseth it, *Eph. i.*

II. It is called the Counsel of his Will, to signify that his Purposes are formed upon the most perfect View of Things, and founded upon what seemeth most fit and proper to his infinite Wisdom. And finally, there is no such Thing in God as Levity and Inconstancy of Temper and Humour, no partial misguided Affections; he hath no mean Passion to gratify, no selfish Interests to pursue, which often put Men upon changing their Purposes.

It may perhaps seem not well reconcilable to what hath been said concerning the Unchangeableness of God's Purposes and Counsels, that he is sometimes in Scripture represented as repenting. But it must be observed, that in other Passages of the sacred Writings it is expressly declared, that God is incapable of repenting. *He is not a Man that he should lie, nor the Son of Man that he should repent.* Numb. xxiii. 19. 1 Sam. xv. 29. This shews, that when Repentance is ascribed to God, it cannot be understood in a strict literal Sense, as if it imported a real proper Change of the Mind and Counsel, or as if something had happened which he was ignorant of before.

334 DISCOURSE XVII.

But because when Men repent of a Thing, they alter their Course of acting; therefore when God in his Dealings towards Nations, or particular Persons, turns from Methods of Kindness and Indulgence, to those of a just Severity, or the contrary, this is, in Accommodation to human Infirmary, represented under the Notion of repenting; though this very Change in his Dealings was what he perfectly knew and determined from the Beginning, and made a Part of his original Scheme, but did not actually take Effect till the proper Time came for manifesting his Purpose. There is a remarkable Passage of this kind, *Gen. vi. 6.* where we are told, that when the Wickedness of Man was great, and all Flesh had corrupted their Way, *it repented the Lord that he had made Man on the Earth, and it grieved him at his Heart.* This is a strong Way of Expression to signify that the great and universal Corruption of Mankind was highly displeasing to a pure and holy Deity; that it was so contrary to the very End of Man's Creation, that if God had been properly capable of being grieved, it would have affected him with Sorrow of Heart. And that whereas he had long borne with the Wickedness of Mankind, and had treated them with great Lenity and Indulgence, he would now severely punish them,

DISCOURSE XVII. 335

them, and manifest his just and righteous Displeasure against them, by sending an universal Deluge to destroy them from off the Face of the Earth; as if it had repented him that he had made them. But all this doth not infer a proper Change in his Mind and Counsels; since this very Punishment which he then inflicted upon Mankind, on the account of their great Wickedness, was what he had purposed from the Beginning, upon a Foresight of this their Wickedness, though he did not actually accomplish it till the proper Season came, and till their abounding Iniquities, which were come to the greatest Height, rendered it proper for him so to do.

Thirdly, God is without Variableness in his Ways of Procedure, and Methods of acting. This followeth from what hath been already observed. For all his Ways and Proceeding towards his Creatures flow from, and are conformable unto his infinite Perfections, and the most wise Counsels and Purposes of his Mind. Since therefore his Perfections and Counsels are unchangeable, his Ways of acting must be so too; *i. e.* they are always invariably wise, good, and holy, always consistent with themselves. For *the Lord is righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works.* Psal. cxlv. 17. It is true they may not always appear to us to be so.

336 DISCOURSE XVII.

Some of the divine Proceedings and Dispensations may seem to be scarce reconcilable to Goodness and Justice, in our narrow Apprehensions of Things. But this we may be sure of, that this seeming Irregularity is owing to our own Short-sightedness, who cannot take in the whole Extent of Things in their just Connection and Harmony. God's *Ways* are sometimes *in the dark Waters* (as the Psalmist expresseth it) and his *Footsteps* are not known. We cannot distinctly trace the Reason of his Dispensations: *Clouds and Darknes* are round about him. Yet even then it is certain, that *Righteousness and Judgment* are the Habitation, or 'Establishment', of his Throne. Psal. xcvi. 2. For he is the Rock, his Work is perfect, and all his Ways are Judgment: a God of Truth, and without Iniquity, just and right is he. Deut. xxxii. 4. And hence it is a Part of that admirable Song of Moses and the Lamb, Rev. xv. 3. *Just and true* are thy Ways, O thou King of Saints. God's Ways of proceeding towards his Creatures in all the different Circumstances and Relations they are under, are still fit and proper upon the whole, and agreeable to the Truth and Reason of Things. Whether he dealeth with Sinners in a Way of great Tenderness and Indulgence, or in a Way of righteous Severity; whether he

receiveth

DISCOURSE XVII. 337

receiveth them to Favour upon their returning to him by a sincere Repentance, or punish them for their Obstinacy and incorrigible Disobedience. His Ways in all these different Turns and Aspects are still uniformly wise and just, still equally worthy of God, and never vary from the steady Rules of Reason and Equity; and it is in this that the Unchangeableness of his Works and Ways doth properly consist. Thus when God at length rejected his ancient People the *Jews*, whom he had for a long time so highly favoured; and when he instituted various Rites and Ordinances, which were to continue till the Time of Reformation, and afterwards abrogated those Ordinances, and caused a new and more perfect Dispensation to be introduced, to which the former was designed to be preparatory; all this did not proceed from any Variableness in God. His Conduct was still of a piece, always consistent with itself, and every Part of his Procedure was only a fulfilling and executing the most wise and harmonious Scheme formed in his infinite Mind. Upon the whole, our Ways are unequal, variable, inconstant; but God's Ways are always equal, constant, uniform, suitable to the Reason of Things, and governed by the steady invariable Rules of infinite Wisdom, Righteousness, and Equity.

338 DISCOURSE XVII.

Thus have I gone through what I thought necessary for illustrating the Apostle's Assertion, that *with God there is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning*. There is no Variableness in his Being and Perfections, in his Counsels and Purposes, in his Actions and Ways. His Perfections are unchangeable as his Essence; his Counsels are always agreeable to his Perfections, and flow from them, and his Actions and Ways are a fulfilling of his most wise Counsels, and are always conformable to the Purposes of his infinite Mind.

I shall conclude this Subject with a few Reflections.

And 1st, This naturally tends to fill us with the most admiring Thoughts of the incomprehensible Jehovah, and should engage us to adore and worship him with the profoundest Veneration of Soul. God is the worthy Object of our religious Homage and Adoration, as having all Excellencies and Perfections in himself in the highest Degree of Eminency; but it should render him especially glorious and venerable, when we consider that he is absolutely, eternally unchangeable in them all. In this Respect we may justly cry out, *Who is like unto thee, O Lord, who is like unto thee? Who in the Heavens can be compared unto the Lord? who among the Sons of the*
the

DISCOURSE XVII. 339

the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?
 The most exalted Angels are in their own Nature liable to Variation and Change. This vast Fabric of Heaven and Earth, which appeareth so stable and permanent whilst upheld by God's mighty Hand, is in itself mutable, subject to Corruption and Alteration; and there is a Time coming when it shall undergo a remarkable Change, and all Things shall put on a new Appearance. But still God is from everlasting to everlasting the same immutably happy, and infinitely perfect Being. Let us therefore worship him with the profoundest Reverence, who is the same Yesterday, and To-day, and for ever, and join in that noble and sublime Address of the devout Psalmist, *Psal. cii. 25, 26, 27.*
Of old hast thou laid the Foundation of the Earth, and the Heavens are the Work of thy Hands: They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a Garment; as a Vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy Years shall have no End.

2dly, The Consideration of God's Unchangeableness yields great Comfort to the righteous, and lays a solid Foundation for a steady Trust and Confidence in him. It is the Unchangeableness of God that is

340 DISCOURSE XVII.

the Basis and Support of Heaven and Earth. It is this that upholdeth the whole Frame of Things, and what is usually called the Course of Nature, and fixeth and establisheth the great Laws of the Universe, of the natural and moral World, without which all Things would run into Disorder and Confusion. If God were not unchangeable, there would be no Security for the Preservation of Order; neither Men nor Angels, nor any Creature could have any Thing stable to depend upon. But it layeth a just Foundation for our Hope and Trust to consider, that as God is perfectly powerful, wise, just, and good, so he is all this eternally and unchangeably. It is because of this that we can trust his Word, and rely upon his Promises, and can draw Comfort from the Consideration of his former Dealings. For he is still as just, as kind, as able as ever he was. *His Arm is not shortened that it cannot save, nor is his Ear grown heavy that it cannot hear. The Mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting unto them that fear him; and his Faithfulness endureth throughout all Generations.* We live in an uncertain World, where all Things about us are in a perpetual Fluctuation and Change. The Condition and Circumstances of particular Persons, Families, and larger Societies, are con-

DISCOURSE XVII. 341

continually varying ; but it is our Comfort that God is ever the same. He who governeth all the Changes and Vicissitude of this variable Scene, is himself immovable and unchangeable ; and will, with a wise and steady Hand, so over-rule Events, as to cause all Things to work together for Good to them that love him. The Power of the greatest earthly Prince is unstable, or at least their Favour is very precarious, varying and inconstant as the Wind. It was the Saying of a famous worldly Politician, who after having been long in high Favour with a great King, fell into Disgrace, that if he had served God as faithfully as he had served his Prince, he would not have cast him off in his old Age. Those whom we are apt to esteem our best Friends on Earth may prove inconstant ; but God loveth his People with an everlasting Love, and hath made with them an everlasting Covenant, well ordered in all Things, and sure. His *Gifts and Calling are without Repentance.* Rom. xi. 29. *He hath said, and we may be sure he will be as good as his Word, I will never fail thee, nor forsake thee.* Heb. xiii. 5. *When my Father and my Mother forsake me, saith the Psalmist, then the Lord will take me up.* Psal. xxvii. 10. *Can a Woman forget her sucking Child, that she*
Z 3
should

342 DISCOURSE XVII.

Should not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb? yea, thy may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Isa. xlix. 15 He is still as ready as ever to receive Sinners to Favour upon their returning to him by a sincere Repentance, and to confer the most valuable Benefits upon all that heartily comply with the most reasonable and condescending Terms of his Covenant. No good Thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. He will grant them his gracious Assistances in this State of Trial, and will at length give them eternal Life. He hath promised it, and he will also do it. He will, in the proper Season, raise them to Heaven, and there place them in a permanent State of Joy and Felicity, where they shall be for ever happy in his Love, and have the unchangeable God to be their satisfying Portion to all Eternity.

3dly, As God's Unchangeableness yieldeth great Consolation to the righteous, so it is Matter of just Terror to the obstinately wicked and impenitent. Sinners are apt to flatter themselves that they shall have Peace though they walk in the Imagination of their own Hearts; that they shall find Mercy at last, though they do persist in an Indulgence of their corrupt Lusts, and in a Course of wilful presumptuous Sin and Disobedience. But such
Hopes

DISCOURSE XVII. 343

Hopes are altogether foolish and vain. If the God with whom they have to do were variable in his Resolutions and Purposes, governed by inconstant Humour or Caprice, they might have some Hazard of escaping his righteous Vengeance. But as it is, they have not the least Ground of Hope whilst they go on in their ungodly Practices. For God is invariably the same infinitely pure and holy Being, who hath no Pleasure in Wickedness, neither shall Evil dwell with him. His Nature must change, which is absolutely impossible, before he can admit the wicked to Communion with him, or to an Interest in his Favour. For such Persons to hope for Heaven, is to hope that God will be unfaithful and untrue, that he will cease to be the righteous and holy Being that he always is, that he will break his own sacred Word, and absolutely subvert the Order of Things which he hath established. An Expectation as foolish as it is impious. Consider this ye that now allow yourselves in a vicious ungodly Course, and who are under the Power of depraved evil Habits. Since it is impossible there should be a Change in God, it remains, that in order to your being happy in his Favour and Love, there must be a Change in you, in your Temper, and in your Conduct. Set

344 DISCOURSE XVII.

yourfelves therefore immediately to fhake off the Dominion of your finful Lufts, and to forfake your evil Ways, and your Doings that are not good. You muft exert your own utmoft Endeavours, being fenfible that you muft either repent and be converted, or you muft perifh ; and you muft at the fame Time be earneft in your Prayers to God for the Influences and Affiftances of his Holy Spirit, that you may be enabled to make to yourfelves new Hearts and new Spirits, and to *put off the old Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Lufts, and to put on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteoufnefs and true Holinefs.* Then fhall he take a divine Delight and Complacency in you, and fhall rejoice over you to do you Good. *For the righteous Lord loveth Righteoufnefs, his Countenance doth behold the upright.*

On the Divine Happiness.

DISCOURSE XVIII.

I TIM. vi. 15.

—*Who is the blessed and only Potentate,
the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.*

GREAT and worthy Conceptions of the Supreme Being lie at the Foundation of all Religion. And accordingly it is one great Excellency of the sacred Writings, that they every where abound with the most just and admirable Descriptions of the Deity, and of his incomparable Glory and Perfection, than which nothing can have a happier Tendency to engage us to adore and worship, to serve and to obey him, and to fill us at once with an ardent

346 DISCOURSE XVIII.

dent superlative Love to him, and with a profound Awe and Reverence of his infinite Majesty.

A remarkable Instance of this we have in these Words of *St. Paul*, in which he represents God as *the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, who only hath Immortality, dwelling in the Light which no Man can approach unto, whom no Man hath seen, or can see; to whom be Honour and Power everlasting. Amen.* What a grand and sublime Description of the Deity is this! It is the first Part of it that I shall now particularly consider, in which God is represented as *the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.* There are two Things which are here plainly signified, the divine Happiness, and the divine Dominion. The first is signified in the Character of *blessed*, which is here given. The second is signified by his being called *the only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.*

I shall distinctly consider each of these.

1st, Let us consider the perfect Happiness of the Supreme Being, which is signified by the Epithet *blessed*, by which he is here described. In the New Testament there are two Words used in the Original concerning God, both which are rendered

DISCOURSE XVIII. 347

dered by our Translators *bleſſed*, though they differ in their Signification. The one is *εὐλογητός*, and is the Word uſed, *Rom. i. 25.* where God is called *bleſſed for ever*; and *Rom. ix. 5.* and in ſeveral other Places. And this Word, in its proper original Meaning, has ſa Relation to the Praises aſcribed to him by his intellectual Creatures, and ſignifies, that to him all Bleſſing and Praise belongs. The other Word which our Translators likewise render *bleſſed*, but which, to diſtinguiſh it from the former, had better be rendered ‘happy’, is *μακάριος*. And this is deſigned, not ſo much to ſignify that he is worthy to be bleſſed and praised by his Creatures, as to ſignify his own eſſential Felicity, that he is moſt perfectly happy in himſelf. And this is the Word uſed in the Text. The firſt Clause of the Verſe might therefore be properly rendered thus, *the ‘happy’ and only Potentate.*

Happineſs is ſo manifeſtly included in the Idea of God, that all that have ever owned the Being of God, have regarded him as poſſeſſed of a perfect Felicity. Yet it will not be amiſs to enquire a little into the Proofs and Evidences upon which this Principle is grounded; how it appears that God is infinitely happy, and what that Happineſs is which belongs

348 DISCOURSE XVIII.

longs to him. This will tend to render that infinitely glorious Being very honourable and amiable in our Eyes, and to fill us with the highest Admiration of him, as well as to convince us how well fitted he is to make his Creatures happy, to be our sufficient Happiness as he is his own.

1st, In general it appears, that God must needs be perfectly happy, if we consider that he has an absolute Fulness of Perfection and Excellency in himself without any possible Defect. The highest Idea we can form of the most compleat Felicity, is a full and absolute Confluence of all possible Excellency, Perfection, and Glory. The more excellent any Being is, and the sublimer and more enlarged its Faculties and Capacities are, its Happiness is of a sublimer and nobler Kind. Thus the Happiness of a Man, when he acts up to the true End of his Being, is greater and of a nobler Nature than that of a Brute, and of an Angel than that of a Man. And as God is infinitely more perfect than the highest Angels, so his Happiness is of as much an higher Kind as the Excellency of his Nature is superior to theirs, *i. e.* in an infinite Degree. The lowest Kind of Happiness is the sensitive; above this rises the rational and
human,

DISCOURSE XVIII. 349

human, above this the angelical, but above all the divine. Whatever there is of Excellency, Felicity, and Joy in the whole Universe is derived from God, and in him is contained and summed up. He comprehends it all eminently in himself, and infinitely more. By enjoying himself, therefore, he enjoys all that is great and good, glorious and happy. For where there is an infinite Fulness of all possible Perfection, there is no room for any farther Desires ; since nothing is deficient, nothing can be added. This boundless Perfection of the divine Nature must needs be a Source of the most perfect Complacency and Joy to his infinite Mind. Where there is infinite Power, Wisdom, Goodness, Righteousness, Truth, and all other Perfections, in the highest Degree of Eminency, and in the most amiable and perfect Harmony, how sublime and compleat must the Happiness resulting from this be ! With what perfect Delight and Self-approbation must he contemplate his own peerless Excellencies, especially as he is the great Original of moral Goodness and Beauty, comprehending in himself all that is lovely, just, and pure. He is infinite essential Life ; *with him is the Fountain of Life.* Psal. xxxvi. 9. He is pure eternal Light ; for we are told, *that God is Light,*

350 DISCOURSE XVIII.

Light, and in him is no Darknefs at all.
 1 John i. 5. No Darknefs of Ignorance, Error, or Impurity. He is infinite Love, Goodnefs itfelf. *God is Love,* 1 John iv. 8. and Love is a Fountain of Delight. Now therefore, fince God is infinite Life, and Light, and Love, he muft needs be his own infinite Happinefs and Joy.

But 2dly, I add as a farther Illuftration of the divine Happinefs, that he hath all this Felicity eternally, unchangeably, independently. As from everlafting to everlafting he is God, unchangeably poffeffed of all Perfections, fo from everlafting to everlafting he is abfolutely and unchangeably happy. As he is equally perfect at all Times, fo he is at all Times equally, that is, infinitely happy; and as he can never in any Part of Duration, or in any poffible Circumftance of Things, be rendered lefs perfect, fo he can never be lefs happy than he always is. He does not in the leaft depend on any Thing without him for his Being or for his Perfection, and confequently does not depend on any Thing without him for his Happinefs, nor can fuffer the leaft Diminution from it, or receive the leaft Acceffion to it. The Creation of this vifible World, the Exiftence of Angels and Men, made no Alteration in God's own proper Happinefs,
 any

DISCOURSE XVIII. 351

any more than in his Effence or Perfection. He was infinitely happy in himself before there was any Creature formed; and though we should suppose this vast Universe with all the Orders of Beings in it to be annihilated, still would the Happiness of God continue unchangeably the same, since he would still be the same infinitely perfect and glorious Being, having a boundless Fulness of Perfection and Excellency in himself.

This leads me to add, 3dly, That God is for ever exalted above every Thing that might be supposed to interrupt or disturb his Felicity and Joy. For nothing can resist his Power, he can do whatsoever he pleaseth in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth. No Events can surprize him, which he did not foresee, since he perfectly knows all Things from the Beginning, and therefore can never properly meet with a Disappointment. There is no Necessity or Fate which binds him, none but what flows from the most free and wise Resolves of his most perfect Mind, whereby he ordereth all Things according to the Counsel of his own Will; no uneasy Passions or Perturbations can possibly have Place in his infinite Mind. It does not disturb his Happiness in the least that he governs this vast World, and
all

352 DISCOURSE XVIII.

all the Orders of Things in it. Hence he is here justly called *the blessed* or 'happy' *Potentate*, to signify, that his universal Government does not in any Degree interrupt or diminish his perfect Felicity. Few earthly Kings or Potentates can be reckoned in any considerable Degree happy. However they appear exalted in Power and Dignity above others, yet many of their Subjects are really happier, and enjoy more true Satisfaction than they. All the external Pomp and Magnificence of Empire, which dazzles vain Mortals, is often only a more splendid Kind of Misery. The best of Princes are often puzzled with emergent Difficulties, or take wrong Measures through a Weakness incident to human Nature, or find themselves unable to execute the good Designs they had concerted, or are distracted with the Multiplicity of Affairs. For what a Burden must it be for a Man to have the Cares, not merely of a Family, but of a Nation upon him! Yet what is this compared with the Care of this vast Universe, and all Things in it? Accordingly *Epicurus* and his Followers who denied a Providence, would not allow their Deities to concern themselves with the Affairs of Men, under Pretence that this was inconsistent with their Happiness. And indeed it might

DISCOURSE XVIII. 353

distract and confound such limited imperfect Deities as these were whom they professed to acknowledge. But a just View and Consideration of the infinite Glory and Perfections of the Supreme Being would convince us that his Government of the World is no way inconsistent with the perfect Blessedness he enjoys. As he created Heaven and Earth, and all Things that are therein, *by his Word*, or *by the Breath of his Mouth*, as the Psalmist expresseth it, *Psal. xxxiii. 6.* so he upholds and governs all Things with the same almighty Facility with which he created them. As he presides over all the Changes of this mutable Scene of Things, without being himself changed, and over all the Motions of this material World, being himself unmoveable, so he governs all the Passions and Perturbations of Men, without being affected himself with those Passions. All the Confusions of this lower World occasion no Tumult or Commotion in him; he rules them all in perfect eternal Tranquillity and unmixed Joy, and by his sovereign Influence brings Light out of Darkness, and Good out of Evil, and maintains the Harmony of the whole amidst many apparent jarring Contrarieties. No single Event happens in the Universe but as he orders or permits for wise Ends,

354 DISCOURSE XVIII.

conformably to the perfect Scheme of Things, in his infinite all-comprehending Mind. He doeth all Things most wisely, most easily, most freely, without Anxiety or Difficulty. And as his Essence fills Heaven and Earth, and is intimately present at once to every Part of this vast Creation, so he governs every single Creature with as much Ease, and as much Exactness, as if he had only that single Creature to mind.

I add, that even the Sins of his Creatures cannot make him unhappy, or disturb and interrupt his perfect Tranquillity. There are indeed several Passages of Scripture, in which God is represented as grieved with the Sins of Mankind. See particularly *Gen.* vi. 6. and *Isa.* xliii. 24. These are popular Ways of speaking in Condescension to our Infirmary, designed to affect our Hearts with a deep Sense of the heinous Malignity of Sin, and its Contrariety to the holy Nature and Will of God ; this, which is all that is intended by such Expressions, is certainly just and true. But they are not to be taken in the strict literal Sense, as if it were in the Power of wicked Men, or Devils, by their most direful Blasphemies, or their most malicious Opposition to his Authority and Laws, really to grieve and disturb their Maker, or to dimi-

DISCOURSE XVIII. 355

nish his essential Felicity. In this Sense that Observation of *Elibu* must be acknowledged to be just: *If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? Or if thy Transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him?* Job xxxv. 6.

But here it is proper to obviate a perverse Inference, that some Persons of profane Minds have drawn from this Principle, that God is infinitely happy. They have argued, that therefore there can be no great Harm in sinning against God, nor will he severely punish it, since it cannot hurt him, nor do him any real Prejudice. But this is a most absurd and unreasonable Conclusion. It is to argue, that because God is infinitely perfect, and consequently infinitely happy, therefore his Authority may be contemned, and his Laws transgressed with Impunity: whereas, on the contrary, it sets the Evil of Sin in the strongest Light, that it is an Opposition to the Authority and Government of the supreme Lord of all, who is possessed of all possible Perfections. Indeed if God were capable of being rendered uneasy and unhappy, the Sins of his Creatures would make him so. This is the genuine Tendency of Sin in its own Nature; and if it does not actually produce that Effect, no Thanks to the Sinner. It is not owing to any Want of Malignity of Sin, but

356 DISCOURSE XVIII.

to the infinite Excellency and Perfection of the divine Nature. And this very Excellency and Perfection of God renders the Evil of Sin more monstrous, which is really an Attempt, though an impotent one, against the Throne, the Authority, and Government of God; and as such deserves and requires to be punished. If Sinners were suffered without Control to oppose their corrupt Will and Appetites to the holy Will of the supreme universal Lord, to make their own Lusts their Rule, and to violate his Laws with Impunity, what but universal Confusion would ensue, a boundless Licentiousness, an utter Subversion of all Order! The beautiful Symmetry of the moral World would be dissolved. How dismal would the State of Things be, if there were no supreme Governor and Judge! And it would be in effect the same, if this supreme Governor and Judge took no Care to maintain his Authority, and suffered the Subjects of his moral Government presumptuously to persist in transgressing his Laws, without punishing them for their Contempt and Disobedience. This would look as if he were indifferent to moral Good or Evil, a Notion the most unworthy of God, and of his infinite Perfection, that can possibly be conceived. But far be it from us to entertain such injurious Thoughts
of

DISCOURSE XVIII. 357

of God. As sure as it is that he is the wise and righteous Lord and Governor of the World, so certain it is that he will act in a Manner suitable to that Relation and Character, and therefore will maintain the Majesty of his Government, and the Authority of his Laws ; and this cannot be done without inflicting due Punishments on the obstinate presumptuous Transgressors. As he is an eternal Lover of Order, of that which is just and pure, and virtuous and lovely, so he hath a fixed Detestation of moral Evil, which is the most manifest Breach of all Order, the most contrary to his own Perfection and Purity, and which tends to bring Confusion and Misery upon the Creation of God. And therefore both the immutable Rectitude and Holiness of his Nature, and his Regard to the universal Good and Happiness of his Creatures, will engage him to do all that is proper for him as a righteous Governor, to stop the spreading of moral Evil, by denouncing and executing his just Judgments against it.

I would conclude this Discourse, concerning the divine Happiness, with this Reflection ; that since God is the blessed or happy Potentate, we may hence see of how great Importance it is to seek for Happiness in him, and to secure an Interest in his Favour. It is vain to expect Happiness from

358 DISCOURSE XVIII.

the greatest Potentates on Earth, whose Humour is variable, whose Favour is precarious, whose Life is short and uncertain, whose Power is limited, and who are often Strangers to true Happiness themselves, and therefore incapable of communicating it to others. But God hath a boundless Fulness of Excellency in himself. He is his own eternal Happiness, and is therefore sufficient to be the Happiness of his Creatures. For certainly an infinite Good must be every Way sufficient to make finite Beings happy. And it is our great Comfort, that he delighteth in the free Communications of his own Glory and Felicity, and in liberal Distributions to his reasonable Creatures, except they shut their Souls against his heavenly Influences, and render themselves unfit for receiving and enjoying his Love and Favour, by indulging themselves in a Course of Sin and Disobedience. The principal gracious Promise of the new Covenant is this, I will be a God unto thee. This every sincere Christian has a Right to apply to himself. And there is more comprehended in it, than any Man is able to express, or any human Heart is able to conceive. What Enemies are we to our own Comfort, in not frequently contemplating the Fulness of Joy, Happiness, and Perfection that is in God,
and

DISCOURSE XVIII. 359

and in not reflecting on that gracious Promise, whereby he hath engaged to be our God, our Portion and Felicity, if we will but return and yield ourselves to him, thro' *Jesus Christ*, by a true and living Faith, a sincere Repentance, and dutiful Obedience. We cannot indeed expect the full Effect of his Promise; whilst we continue in this present sinful World. But the Time is coming, and that shortly, when that infinitely perfect and happy Being shall display his Glory, and communicate of his Fulness to his faithful Servants and Children, who loved and served him in Sincerity here on Earth, in such a Manner as shall for ever ravish their Souls, and diffuse Joy and Gladness through all their Faculties and Powers. Then shall they behold his Face in Righteousness, and be perfectly satisfied with his Likeness. For with him is the Fountain of Life, and in his Light shall they see Light. In his Presence is Fulness of Joy, and at his right Hand there are Pleasures for evermore. Rejoice therefore in the Lord, O ye righteous, and shout for Joy all ye that are upright in Heart. Let the Man of real Piety and Virtue delight himself in the Lord, and in his infinite Perfections, even when the World frowns upon him, and his outward Circumstances have a dark and uncomfortable

360 DISCOURSE XVIII.

Aspect. If the Lord is his Portion, whatever be his present Lot, he shall in the final Issue of Things be perfectly happy; and may upon good Grounds, break forth into that rapturous Strain of the Prophet, *Although the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall Fruit be in the Vine, the Labour of the Olive shall fail, and the Fields shall yield no Meat, the Flock shall be cut off from the Fold, and there shall be no Herd in the Stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation.* Habak. iii. 17, 18.



On the Divine Dominion.

DISCOURSE XIX.

I TIM. vi. 15.

—*Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.*

IN my former Discourse on these Words, it was observed, that there are two Things plainly signified here, *the divine Happiness*, and *the divine Dominion*. The first is signified in the Character of *blessed*, or, as it might more properly be rendered, ‘happy’, which is here given him. The second is signified in his being called, *the only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*.

The first of these has already been considered. It was shewn, that God must needs be perfectly happy, because he has all
the

362 DISCOURSE XIX.

the Fulness of Perfection and Excellency in himself; and that he has all this eternally, unchangeably, and independently. And it was farther observed, that God is for ever exalted above every thing that could be supposed to interrupt or disturb his Felicity. The Government of this vast Universe, and all the Orders of Beings in it, does not create any Uneasiness in him: nor is it in the Power of any of his Creatures, by their Oppositions to his Authority, and Transgressions of his Laws, in the least to diminish the perfect Blessedness he for ever enjoys. Some Persons of profane Minds have drawn a perverse Inference from this, as if because Sin cannot hurt God, therefore there is no great Evil in sinning against him, nor will he severely punish it. But it was shewn, that if the Sins of his Creatures do not make God unhappy, this is not owing to any Want of Malignity in Sin, which would render him unhappy if he were capable of being so, but is owing to the infinite Excellency and Perfection of his Nature; and this very Excellency and Perfection of God mightily heightens the Evil of Sin, which is an Attempt against his Authority and Government, and a monstrous Breach of Order, and, as such, deserves and requires to be punished. Nor does God's inflicting Punishments on his rebellious Creatures occasion the least Perturbation

DISCOURSE XIX. 363

tion in his infinite Mind, since it is only acting agreeably to Justice and Order, and in a Manner worthy of his Perfections, and becoming him as the wise and righteous Governor of the World, and which tends to the maintaining and promoting the universal Good.

I concluded with observing, that as God is his own eternal Happiness, so he is every way sufficient to be the Happiness of his Creatures, and delights in the free Communications of his own Goodness : that therefore it is of the highest Importance to us to seek to him for Happiness, and to endeavour to secure an Interest in his Favour.

Having considered the first Thing here signified, *viz.* the divine Happiness ; the next Thing that comes to be considered is, the divine Dominion. As he is said to be the *blessed*, or 'happy', so he is represented to be *the only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.*

God is here called *the only Potentate*, as if there was no other that deserved the Name of Potentate but God alone. And indeed there is no other Potentate, whose Dominion is supreme and absolute, universal in its Extent, and unchangeable and eternal in its Duration.

1st, God may be said to be *the only Potentate*, because he alone is truly and properly

364 DISCOURSE XIX.

perly supreme. All other Potentates are subject to him, but he himself is subject to none. Hence he is here called, *the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*. The highest Honour that the mightiest earthly Monarchs can pretend to, is at best to be regarded as his Vicegerents. He is the proper Source and supreme Original of Dominion and Power. *There is no Power but of God, and the Powers that be are ordained of God.* Rom. xiii. 1. From him they ultimately derive their Authority, and they are all under his sovereign Control. *Promotion cometh neither from the East, nor from the West, nor from the South: but God is the Judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another.* Psal. lxxv. 6, 7. *He changeth the Times and the Seasons; he removeth Kings, and setteth up Kings.* Dan. ii. 21. Or as it is expressed, *Dan. iv. 25. The most High ruleth in the Kingdom of Men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.* In this and several other Passages of the sacred Writings, God is described under the Character of the most High, to shew, that he is infinitely superior to all other Beings whatsoever. *Thou, Lord, art most high for evermore,* saith the Psalmist, *Psal. xcii. 8.* He is said to be higher than the highest, *Eccles. v. 8. If thou seest the Oppression of the Poor, and violent perverting of Judgment and Justice*
in

DISCOURSE XIX. 365

in a Province; marvel not at the Matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they. We are told, that he judgeth those that are high. Job xxi. 22. The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all Gods. Psal. xcv. 3. i. e. he is infinitely exalted, not only above all earthly Princes and Potentates, but above the highest Angels, the Thrones and Dominions, Principalities and Powers, in heavenly Places. For who in the Heavens can be compared unto the Lord? Who among the Sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord? Psal. lxxxix. 6.

2dly, God may be said to be *the only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*, because his Dominion, and his only, is in the properest Sense absolute and unaccountable, though at the same time most just and righteous: Whereas that of all earthly Kings is limited, if not by their own Subjects, and the Laws of the Community, yet by the Law of God, to whom they are subject, and to whom they must give an Account. The Absoluteness of God's Dominion is frequently asserted in the sacred Writings, in the strongest Terms, *Our God is in the Heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased. Psal. cxv. 3. Or as St. Paul expresseth it, he worketh all Things according to the Counsel of his own Will. Eph. i. 11. Why striveest thou against*

366 DISCOURSE XIX.

against him, saith *Elibu* to *Job*, for he giveth not Account of any of his Matters? *Job* xxxiii. 13. That haughty King *Nebuchadnezzar* was brought to make that noble Acknowledgment of God's absolute Dominion and Sovereignty: *All the Inhabitants of the Earth are reputed as nothing; and he doth according to his Will in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth; and none can stay his Hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?* *Dan.* iv. 35. His Dominion is absolute, because there is no Authority to which he is subject, no Superior to give him Laws, or prescribe Rules to him, no Counsellor to instruct or direct him, no higher Power or Tribunal to which he is accountable. He hath an absolute Sovereignty over the Subjects of his Government, because they are all his Creatures. For shall the Clay say to him that fashioned it, *What makest thou?* *Isa.* xlv. 9. He gave them Life, and Breath, and all Things, and can without Injustice withdraw that Life, and the Enjoyments of it, when he pleases. For may not he do what he will with his own? *Matth.* xx. 15. *The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the Grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.* *1 Sam.* ii. 6, 7. But earthly Princes are of the same
Species

DISCOURSE XIX. 367

Species of Beings with their Subjects, Flesh and Blood as well as they ; and as they did not give them Existence, so they have not an absolute Right over their Lives, to take them away at their own Pleasure. And as God's Creation of us gives him an undoubted Property in us, and lays a just Foundation for his absolute Dominion over us, so his infinite Perfection, the transcendant unequalled Excellency of his Nature more eminently qualifies him for exercising it. No Being is fit to have absolute Power, but one of infallible Wisdom, and of infinite Righteousness and Goodness, because such an one can never abuse his Power. Though therefore God's Power and Dominion be strictly and properly absolute and unlimited, and in that Sense his Government may be said to be arbitrary, exercised according to his own Will, without any external Law to direct or oblige him ; yet this should give us no Uneasiness : for the Perfection and Excellency of his own Nature is an eternal Law to him, which he can never counteract without denying himself. His Creatures therefore have the highest possible Security, that he will never do any thing but what is wise, and just, and good. He is for ever raised above all possible Temptations to Cruelty and Injustice, and never acts from mere unreasonable Humour

368 DISCOURSE XIX.

or Caprice, but always from the most just Reasons, and a most wise Benevolence, which hath the Good of the whole ever in View, and of each Individual, as far as is consistent with universal Order. There are many noble Declarations to this Purpose in the holy Scriptures. *The Lord is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all his Works: Righteous is he in all his Ways, and holy in all he doeth.* P^{sal.} cxlv. 9, 17. *He is the Rock, his Work is perfect, and all his Ways are Judgment; a God of Truth, and without Iniquity, just and right is he.* Deut. xxxii. 4. His Ways are often in the dark Waters, and his Footsteps are not known, and we cannot penetrate into the Reason of his Dispensations; yet even when Clouds and Darknes are about him, *Righteousness and Judgment are the Habitation, or 'Establishment', of his Throne.* P^{sal.} xcvi. 2. The whole Creation is called upon to rejoice in this, that the Lord reigneth, P^{sal.} xcvi. 10, 11, 12, 13. We have very amiable Representations frequently made to us in the sacred Writings of the divine Government and Providence. *The Lord executeth Judgment for the oppressed: he giveth Food to the hungry. The Lord looseth the Prisoners: the Lord openeth the Eyes of the blind: the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down: the Lord loveth the righteous. The Lord preserveth*

DISCOURSE XIX. 369

serveth the Strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and Widow: but the Way of the wicked he turneth upside down. Pſal. cxlvi, 7, 8, 9.

3dly, God may be juſtly called *the only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*, with reſpect to the Univerſality of his Dominion. He alone is the univerſal Lord; this vaſt Univerſe is his Empire. *The Lord hath eſtabliſhed his Throne in the Heavens, and his Kingdom ruleth over all.* Pſal. ciii. 19. How narrow and ſcanty is the Dominion of the greateſt earthly Potentates compared with this! Let us conſider this Earth of ours in its utmoſt Extent, and then give an unbounded Stretch to our Imagination, in conceiving as far as we are able, all thoſe vaſt and numberleſs Worlds around us, to which this Earth of ours is but a diminutive Spot, they are all equally under the Dominion of God. The higheſt Angels that excel in Wiſdom and Strength are his Subjects. They do his Commandments, hearkening to the Voice of his Word, and are his Miniſters to do his Pleaſure. And as his Government extends to all the various Orders of Beings throughout the Univerſe, ſo alſo to every Individual among them, from the greateſt to the leaſt and meaneſt. The Affairs not only of Nations, but of Families and particular

370 DISCOURSE XIX.

Persons, with the Events relating to them, and not only their outward Actions, but their very Hearts and Thoughts, which do not come within the Cognizance of human Judicatures, are all under the Inspection and Government of God. This his universal and particular Providence is frequently asserted and described in the holy Scriptures: and it is of great Importance to us, to get our Minds firmly established in the Belief of it.

4thly, The last Thing I would observe, concerning the Dominion of God, and by which it is eminently distinguished from that of all other Potentates, is, that it is unchangeable and eternal. *Thy Kingdom, saith the Psalmist, is an everlasting Kingdom, and thy Dominion endureth throughout all Generations.* Psal. cxlv. 13. The Empires of this World, even those of them which seem to be established on the surest Foundations, continue but for a few Generations; but the Reigns of particular Princes are still shorter. It may be justly said, concerning every one of them, *His Breath goeth forth, he returneth to his Earth; in that very Day his Thoughts perish.* Psal. cxlvi. 4. But as it there follows, Ver. 10. *The Lord reigneth for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all Generations. The Lord is the true God, saith the Prophet Jeremiah, he is the living*
 4 God,

DISCOURSE XIX. 371

God, and an everlasting King. Jer. x. 10. His Throne is for ever raised above all the Changes and Vicissitudes of Time. His Dominion is stable as Eternity. *Thy Throne is established of old, saith the Psalmist ; thou art from everlasting.* Psal xciii. 2. The Time is coming when all earthly Kingdoms shall fail, and all their Authority and Power shall be put down ; yea, and *Christ* himself shall deliver up his mediatorial Kingdom to God, even the Father, which was erected for special Ends and Purposes ; but still the universal Dominion of God shall be unchanged, and he shall in the most eminent and glorious Sense be for ever *all in all.* 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28.

Thus have I considered the divine Happiness and the divine Dominion, as signified in the noble Description here given of God, that he is *the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.*

I shall conclude the whole with a few Reflections.

And 1st, It is a natural Inference from what has been offered on this Subject, that God is the worthy Object of the highest Praises and Adorations of all intelligent Beings. In what rapturous Strains doth the Psalmist express himself to this Purpose in several of his divine Hymns, and

372 DISCOURSE XIX.

particularly in the 145th Psalm, *I will extol thee, my God, O King, and I will bless thy Name for ever and ever. Every Day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy Name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his Greatness is unsearchable. One Generation shall praise thy Works to another, and shall declare thy mighty Acts. I will speak of the glorious Honour of thy Majesty, and of thy wondrous Works. And Men shall speak of the Might of thy terrible Acts; and I will declare thy Greatness. They shall abundantly utter the Memory of thy great Goodness, and shall sing of thy Righteousness. All thy Works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy Saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the Glory of thy Kingdom, and talk of thy Power: To make known to the Sons of Men his mighty Acts, and the glorious Majesty of his Kingdom.* It is true, that God is not capable of receiving the least Accession to his essential Glory and Felicity by the united Praises and Adorations of Angels and Men. But yet it is his Will that we should employ ourselves this Way, because it is agreeable to the just Order of Things that it should be so. If it be fit and reasonable, as it manifestly is, that reasonable Beings should entertain the highest Esteem, Veneration, and Love, for the
 great

DISCOURSE XIX. 373

great Lord of the Universe, the Fountain of all Perfection and Happiness, and their constant bountiful Benefactor, it is equally fit and reasonable that they should express those inward good Affections and Dispositions of their Minds by their adoring Praises and Acknowledgments. And this is acceptable unto God, not as if he were like vain Men that love to hear their own Praises, as some Enemies to Religion have unworthily represented it, but because he is pleased to see his reasonable Creatures exercising good Affections, and acting in a Manner becoming the Obligations they are under, and the noble Faculties he hath given them. And therefore, for our Encouragement he condescendeth to express his Complacency in our Praises and Adorations when offered up in the Sincerity of our Hearts, and will as certainly and as amply reward them, as if he received a real Honour and Advantage from our religious Services. When we consider this, we have Reason to cry out, *Lord, what is Man that thou art mindful of him? and the Son of Man that thou visitest him?* What are our poor imperfect Praises and Services, that thou shouldest so graciously regard them, and even vouchsafe to declare, that whosoever offereth Praise honoureth thee! Surely our Goodness extendeth not unto thee,

374 DISCOURSE XIX.

but thy Goodness is continually flowing down upon us, and therefore we will, as is most reasonable, with all the Powers thou hast given us, adore and bless thee, and manifest the Sense we have of the Obligations we are under, both by the Praises of our Lips and the Obedience of our Lips. This leads me to add,

2dly, That since God is *the blessed and only Potentate*, we owe him the most absolute and unreserved, and at the same Time the most chearful Submission and Obedience. He has given us Laws for the Rule of our Duty, all which Laws we are indispensably bound to observe. It highly concerneth us therefore to be acquainted with his holy Will, and what it is that he requireth of us; our Part is not to dispute, but to obey. We should set ourselves heartily to fulfil his Commandments, however they may appear difficult, or disagreeable to the Flesh. And our Obedience should not be merely by Constraint, but of Choice, as being persuaded of his just Propriety in us, and Dominion over us, that he is our most rightful Sovereign and Lord, and the Lord of the Universe, of infinite Wisdom, Righteousness, and Goodness; and that all his Laws are holy, just, and good, and tend to the true Felicity and Perfection of our own Nature,

DISCOURSE XIX. 375

Nature. We should not suffer the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, or the Pride of Life, any Prospects of worldly Honours, Pleasures, or Gain, to entice us, or any Fears of worldly Evils to deter us from the Duty and Allegiance we owe him. If it ever happens, that the Commands of an earthly Monarch interfere with the Laws of the great *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*, we must not hesitate a Moment which to prefer; for it is an eternal Truth, that *we ought to obey God rather than Man*. Acts v. 29. He alone is the Lord of Conscience; and all Laws are in themselves void, and incapable of laying an Obligation upon us which are contrary to the divine. His Displeasure is infinitely more to be feared than that of any, or all the Potentates upon Earth. They can only *kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do*; but he, *after he hath killed, hath Power to cast into Hell*; as our Saviour speaks, *Luke xii. 4, 5*. And on the other Hand, his Favour is of infinitely greater Importance to us, than that of the greatest earthly Monarchs. He hath the Treasures of the Universe in his Hands, and is himself the infinite Good, the everlasting Source of true Glory and Blessedness. They can at best only bestow some

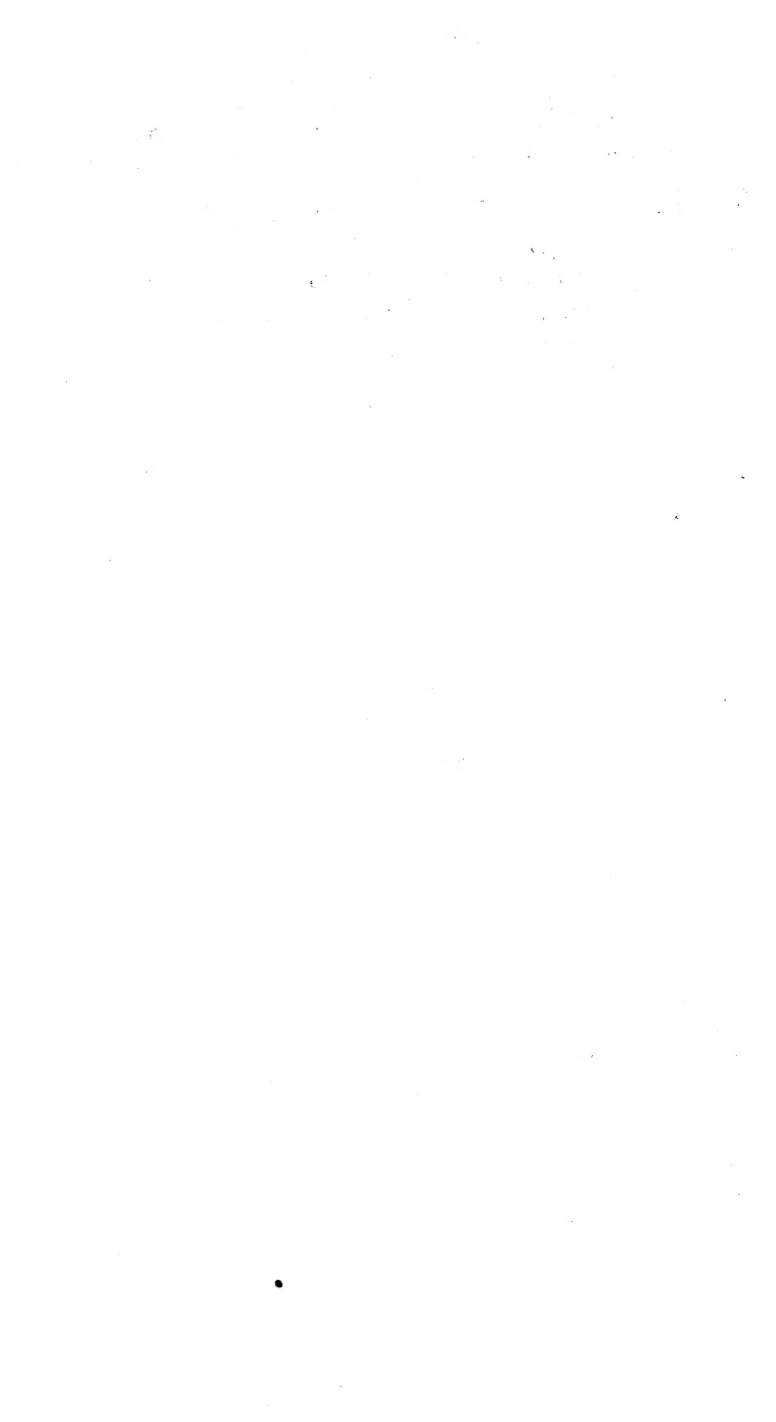
376 DISCOURSE XIX.

transitory Riches and Honours on their Servants and Favourites; and what are these compared with that eternal Glory and Felicity with which God will reward those that love and serve him in Sincerity? This is a Reward far transcending what we could have challenged as strictly due to us, even though we had perfectly obeyed. How much less could we have claimed it on the Account of an Obedience so imperfect and defective as ours is! But he will reward us, not merely according to our Deserts, but according to the glorious Riches of his Grace in *Jesus Christ*, through whom he is pleased graciously to accept and reward our sincere Obedience, flowing from Faith and Love, though mixed with lamented Failures and Defects. This is the Tenor of that Covenant which he hath established with us through the Redeemer, and in which we are assured, that eternal Life is the Gift of God through *Jesus Christ*, to those that sincerely believe and obey him. Let us therefore make it our daily Care and Endeavour to observe the holy and excellent Laws which he hath given us, and to go on in a *patient Continuance in well-doing*, looking for the glorious *Appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ*, which in his Times he shall shew, who

DISCOURSE XIX. 377

is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; who only hath Immortality, dwelling in the Light which no Man can approach unto, whom no Man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be Honour and Power everlasting. Amen.





On doing all to the Glory of God.

DISCOURSE XX.

I CORIN. X. 31.

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.

THIS excellent apostolical Precept is so admirably comprehensive, and of such an extensive Influence on the Conduct of the Christian Life, that it certainly deserves a very particular and attentive Consideration. By a due Observation of this, we shall, in some Measure, answer the noble End of our Being, which is to honour and glorify God on Earth, in order to our eternal Enjoyment of him in the heavenly World.

For

380 DISCOURSE XX.

For clearing the Connection of these Words it must be observed, that the Apostle *Paul* in this Chapter declares to the Christian Converts, that they might without Scruple eat *whatever was sold in the Shambles, asking no Questions for Conscience-sake*; yet at the same Time he acquaints them, that whenever it happened, that their eating any Thing might be a Stumbling-block to a weak Brother, and cause their Liberty to be evil spoken of, they should, out of a Regard to the Honour of God and Religion, and to the Edification of their Neighbour, abstain from what otherwise would have been in itself lawful. And then he gives it as an excellent general Rule, *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God*. Eating and drinking is among us the most common Actions of Life; we are then apt to have little else in View than the satisfying the Cravings of Nature. Yet even in eating and drinking we are to have an ultimate Regard *to the Glory of God*. We must not eat and drink as the Brutes do, merely to gratify sensual Appetite, but must take Care that we do it in a regular Subordination to the divine Glory, as our highest End. A Regard to this great End must run through all our Actions, and influence our whole Conduct.

In

DISCOURSE XX. 381

In treating of this Subject I propose, first, to inquire into the just Meaning and Extent of this Precept, *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.* Secondly, I shall shew the Reasonableness of this Precept, and the Obligations we are under to glorify God in whatsoever we do.

First, Let us offer something for explaining the just Design and Extent of this Precept. And here it will be proper to inquire, both what those Actions are which we are here required to do *to the Glory of God*, and what is to be understood by our doing them to his Glory.

As to the Actions here referred to, we are told in general, that *whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we must do all to the Glory of God.* Nothing can be expressed or delivered in more comprehensive Terms. It extends to all our Actions. There is no Part of our Conduct and Behaviour, but what comes in one Degree or other under the Regulation of this Precept. The Actions of Life may be ranked under three principal Heads, natural, civil, and those of a moral and religious Nature; and in each of these we are to have a Respect *to the Glory of God* as our supreme End. This holds even with regard to our natural Actions themselves, such

such as eating and drinking, and other Actions that tend to the Support of this animal Life, and the gratifying our natural Appetites. These, abstractly and in themselves considered, have nothing of moral Good or Evil in them; yet they are to be regulated in Men by a superior Regard *to the Glory of God*, with respect to the Measure and Degree of them, and several Circumstances attending them. The same may be said of those Actions which are designed for our Recreation. This Precept also extends to civil Actions, or Actions that appertain to us as Members of civil Society, and of larger or lesser Communities, and to those Usages which the Customs of Nations have introduced. But above all, this Precept extends to those Actions which are directly and immediately of a moral and religious Nature. Such are the Duties required of us in the divine Law relating to God, our Neighbours, and ourselves. All these several Kinds of Actions which have been mentioned may be regarded as comprehended under this general Direction. Let us therefore enquire in what Sense it is to be understood, that we are to *do whatsoever we do to the Glory of God*.

And in order to this, we must, in the first Place, see that the Matter of every
 one

DISCOURSE XX. 383

one of our Actions be lawful in itself, not contrary to the Will or Law of God. It is not indeed necessary that all our Actions be as to the Matter of them expressly commanded by God. But then we are, on no Pretence whatsoever, to allow ourselves in the Commission of any Thing that is forbidden in the divine Law; for that Action, which as to the Matter of it is forbidden by God, can never be done to his Glory. No Intention, let it be ever so spacious, can sanctify any Action that is in itself evil. It is an invariable Rule, that we must not do Evil that Good may come of it. *Rom. iii. 8.* When therefore we are required to do *whatsoever we do to the Glory of God*; it necessarily supposes that we must take Care, that all our Actions be, as to the Matter of them, lawful. We must also be careful, that as to the Measure or Manner of them there be nothing in them contrary to the divine Will, or unfuitable to our Character as reasonable Creatures and Christians. Many Actions which are in themselves lawful, or of an indifferent Nature, may be carried to such an Excess, or attended with such Circumstances, as to render them culpable in the Sight of God, or at least inexpedient. It highly concerns us therefore, if we would answer the true Design
of

384 DISCOURSE XX.

of this Precept, to take Care that our Actions be, as to the Matter and Manner of them, lawful and innocent, and such as do not in the least intrench on the Regard that is due to the Rules of Religion and Prudence, Charity and Decency.

But that which is most directly intended here, is, that all our Actions must be ultimately devoted *to the Glory of God*, as our supreme governing End. *The Glory of God* is a Phrase which frequently occurs in the sacred Writings. It is properly and originally to be understood of the divine Perfections, which, in themselves considered, are eternally and invariably the same. This may be called his essential Glory, which is incapable of Accession or Diminution. Nor can any Creature pretend, without the highest Presumption, in this Sense to advance *the Glory of God*, or to add to the divine Perfections and Happiness. The only Sense therefore in which any Creature can be said to glorify God, is, that it may be instrumental to shew forth his Glory, and may contribute to the Manifestation and Display of the divine Perfections. We may then be said to do what we do to his Glory, when we act in such a Manner as to shew the high Sense we have of his supreme Majesty and Dominion, and of his infinite Per-

DISCOURSE XX. 385

Perfections, his Wisdom, Power, Righteousness, and Goodness; when we make an amiable Representation of him to the World, and endeavour to raise the same religious Sentiments and Affections towards him in others, which we feel in our own Breasts; when we yield a dutiful unre-served Subjection to his Authority, and, as far as in us lies, answer the Design of his moral Administrations by contributing to promote good Order, Holiness, and Happiness, in ourselves and others. God himself declares, *Whoso offereth Praise, glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his Conversation aright, will I shew the Salvation of God.* Psal. l. 23. Our Saviour saith to his Disciples, *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much Fruit, so shall ye be my Disciples.* John xv. 8. To the same Purpose is that Exhortation, *Matt. v. 16. Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.* And St. Paul prays for the Christian Converts, that they might be filled with the Fruits of Righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the Glory and Praise of God. Phil. i. 11.

This may serve to give us a general Notion of what is to be understood by our doing *whatsoever we do to the Glory of God.* But it may be of Use to explain

386 DISCOURSE XX.

this Matter more distinctly: And to this Purpose I would observe,

1st, That this is not to be understood in so strict a Sense as if we were to have no other End in View in any of our Actions but the divine Glory, or as if we were to have an actual explicit Intention this Way in every single Action we perform.

There are several particular Ends which it is lawful for us to have in View, both with regard to ourselves and others, in carrying on the Business, or relishing the Enjoyments of human Life. The *Glory of God* is not designed to be the only End we are to aim at, exclusive of all others; it is sufficient if it be the highest End, to which every Thing else must be subordinate, Nor can we always have that great End actually in our Thoughts, amidst the vast Variety of Things which employ our Minds, and engage our Attention in this present State. When therefore it is here required of us, that *whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should do all to the Glory of God*; it signifies,

1st, That we must have an habitual fixed Intention, to please and serve God, and to glorify him in the World; and that this must have a governing Influence over us in the general Course of our Practice.

3

2dly,

DISCOURSE XX. 387

2dly, That we must frequently have an actual Intention this Way in the particular Actions we perform, when proper Opportunity offers, and the Case seems to require it.

1st, We must have an habitual fixed Intention to please and serve God, and to glorify him in the World; and this must have a governing Influence over us in the general Course of our Practice. This habitual Intention of glorifying God supposes that our Souls are strongly impressed with a deep and lively Sense of his adorable Perfections, his absolute Propriety in us, and just Dominion over us; and the rightful Claim he hath to all the Service and Obedience we are capable of rendering. And in consequence of this, it must be not merely a sudden transient Resolution, but the deliberate fixed Purpose of our Souls, that we will be for God, and not for another; that we will live not unto ourselves but unto him; and that we will make it our daily Care and Business to serve and to obey him; and to walk before him unto all pleasing. Love to God, joined with a profound Reverence and holy Fear of his divine Majesty, and Zeal for his Glory, must become so far the habitual Temper and Disposition of our Minds, as to diffuse its Influence through

388 DISCOURSE XX.

our whole Behaviour, so as both to keep us from allowing ourselves in any Thing that is contrary to his holy Nature and Will, and to be a powerful Incentive to those Actions by which we may obtain his Approbation, and shew forth his Praises and Virtues. As our Lord hath taught us to make it our constant Prayer to God, that his Name may be hallowed or glorified; so to promote this great End by all proper Means in our Power, must be the principal ruling Intention that animates all our Endeavours, and directs and regulates our Practice. A Fear of offending God, and a Desire of pleasing and honouring him, must run through the whole of our Conversation and Deportment, and engage us to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lufts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World. We must, in Conformity to the Will of God, and in Obedience to his Commands, follow the Things which are true, just, and venerable, and pure and lovely, and virtuous and praise-worthy; and by such a Course of Action we shall glorify him in the World, and perform the Work which he hath given us to do.

But 2dly, It must not only be our fixed habitual Intention to please and honour God in our general Course, but we must
 very

DISCOURSE XX. 389

very frequently have an actual Intention this Way, and must propose *the Glory of God* as our chief End in the particular Actions we perform. And indeed this is the natural Consequence of the former. Where there is a sincere habitual Intention of serving and glorifying God, it will frequently put the Soul upon actually raising its Thoughts, Affections, and Views, to the Supreme Being, and aiming at his Glory as its principal End. Many particular Occasions might be mentioned, in which this is highly proper.

Thus it should be more especially in our immediate Approaches unto God in religious Duties. We must then have our Thoughts actually fixed on that glorious Majesty, and must realize him as immediately present. In all the Parts of our religious Services, in our Petitions, Confessions, and Thanksgivings; in our attending on divine Ordinances, and reading or hearing his holy Word, we must not have it in View, merely to be seen of Men, or to make a fair outward Shew and Appearance, but should have an actual Intention to glorify God in the World, to render him that Tribute of religious Homage and Adoration, which is so justly due to him, and to promote our spiritual Improvement and Growth in Grace and Holiness, that we

390 DISCOURSE XX.

may be filled with those *Fruits of Righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the Glory and Praise of God.*

And not only in religious Duties, but in Actions that are of a civil Nature, we should often have an actual Intention to serve and glorify God. When we engage in any Affair or Action of Importance of any kind, as we should take care that it be lawful in itself, and that there be nothing in it for Matter or Manner disagreeable to the Will of God, so it is proper that we should commend it to the divine Blessing. And if we have a View, as we lawfully may, to our own Honour, or Pleasure, or Interest, yet still all must be in a regular Subordination *to the Glory of God* as our supreme End, and in an entire Consistency with it.

Again, In entering on the Employment of every Day, in our several Callings and Stations, we should begin with an actual Intention of doing whatsoever we do, as in the Sight of God, and with an Eye to his Favour and Approbation. Every Morning should we commit ourselves, and all our Concernments to him, whose wise and good Providence hath appointed us our several Stations, and whose Will it is, that we should exercise ourselves in various Offices, according to the several Relations we bear, and the Rank we hold in the Community.

Thus

DISCOURSE XX. 391

Thus must we perform the Work of every Day in Subordination to the Will and to the Honour of God, doing what we do as unto the Lord, and not unto Men. Then shall we answer the Design of that excellent Exhortation, *Be thou in the Fear of the Lord all the Day long.* Prov. xxiii. 17. and shall be able, upon good Grounds, to conclude the Day, as well as begin it, with Acknowledgments of our constant Dependence upon God, and our great Obligations to his Goodness, and with devoting ourselves, and our Actions and Affairs, to his Glory and Service.

I add, and it is what the Words of the Text lead us to take Notice of, that even in our natural Actions, such as eating and drinking, we must have a Regard to the divine Glory. To signify this is the Design of that laudable Custom, of making a short Address to God before and after our stated Meals; a Custom which some in the present Age seem willingly to discard, as if they were ashamed of every Thing that has the Appearance of Religion; but which is of the greatest Antiquity, both amongst Jews and Christians. The Jews reckon it as one of the affirmative Precepts of the Law, *Let every one bless God in taking his Repast*; to which purpose they cite several Texts of Scripture. And they have

392 DISCOURSE XX.

been from the most ancient Times, and still are, very exact in observing it. And it may be gathered from several Passages of the New Testament, that this was the Practice of our Saviour himself, and his Apostles: and that it constantly obtained in the primitive Christian Church, appears from the Testimony of the ancient Christian Writers. And it hath continued among Christians in a greater or less Degree ever since. And it deserves our Notice, that it was customary among the Heathens themselves, as the learned have shewn, especially among the ancient *Greeks* and *Romans*, to invoke their Deities, and to celebrate them at their Feasts and Entertainments: and this is said to be the Usage among the *Chinese* and other Eastern Nations at this Day: as it is also among the Mahometans. So that it may be affirmed, that something like this has very generally obtained among all civilized Nations which have kept up any Form or Shew of Religion. But it is not sufficient merely to use a few Words in a formal Way; we must have an inward Sense of our absolute Dependence upon God, and of our Obligations to him as our sovereign Benefactor, who in his great Goodness provideth for our daily Nourishment, and not only for our Necessities, but for our Pleasure: and
it

DISCOURSE XX. 393

it must be our sincere Intention to employ the Strength which is thus daily repaired and renewed, in his Service, and to his Glory.

Finally, We must have an Eye to the *Glory of God*, even in our Diversions. We must take Care that they be lawful in themselves, and that they be kept within the Bounds of a due Moderation, and not carried to an Excess. We must use them as Recreations allowed us by our merciful heavenly Father, for preserving and promoting our Health, and exhilarating our Spirits, that we may be the better fitted for the chearful Discharge of the various Duties incumbent upon us in this present State.

Thus have I endeavoured to explain the true Intention and Design of this comprehensive Precept ; *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.* I propose in my next Discourse to shew the Reasonableness of this Precept, and to offer some other Considerations for the farther Illustration of this Subject.

On doing all to the Glory of God.

DISCOURSE XXI.

I COR. X. 31.

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.

IN my former Discourse on these Words, several Things were offered for explaining the just Design and Extent of this Precept. It was observed, that it is admirably comprehensive, and extends in a greater or less Degree to all our Actions. It supposes, that all our Actions must, both as to the Matter of them, and as to the Manner or Degree, be lawful and innocent; and that there must be nothing in them contrary to the divine Will or Law, or which intrudes in the least on the Rules of Religion and Prudence,

396 DISCOURSE XXI.

Prudence, of Justice, Charity, and Decency. And it especially signifies, that all our Actions must be ultimately directed *to the Glory of God* as our supreme governing End. This is not to be understood, as if by any Thing we are capable of doing, we could make the least Accession to his essential Glory, *i. e.* to his Perfection and Happiness. The only Sense in which reasonable Creatures can be said to glorify God, is, that they may be instrumental to shew forth his Glory, or to contribute to the Manifestation and Display of the divine Perfections, and to answer the great Ends of his moral Administration, by promoting good Order, Holiness, and Happiness, in themselves and others. Thus to glorify God is the chief End we are to propose in all our Actions: not as if it were possible for us actually to think of God, and to have an explicit Intention in every single Action we perform, to do it to his Glory; but an habitual fixed Intention to please and serve God, and to glorify him in the World, must run through the general Course of our Practice, and have a governing Influence over our whole Department. And we must also frequently have an actual Intention this Way, when a proper Opportunity offers in the particular Actions we perform. Several Instances were mentioned to illustrate this,

DISCOURSE XXI. 397

this, which I shall not now repeat, but shall proceed according to the Order proposed,

Secondly, To shew the Reasonableness of this Precept, and the Obligations we are under to *do whatsoever we do to the Glory of God.*

And this will appear, if we consider,

1st, That this is, in the Nature of the Thing, the best and noblest End which we can possibly have in View. Man, as he is an intelligent Creature, must propose some End which he is to have principally in View. And if we consult unprejudiced Reason, *the Glory of God* is properly the highest End, and every other End must be in a Subserviency to this. As God is in himself the greatest and the best of Beings, the original Source and Centre of all Perfection and Happiness, so he is in the Nature of Things, the chief Good, and the ultimate End, *of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all Things.* What other End can we reasonably propose to ourselves as the governing End in our general Conduct, but *the Glory of God*? Would we propose our own Honour, Profit, and Pleasure, the Advancement of our own particular Interests? Would we make this our chief End? But is it just and reasonable, that our narrow selfish Interests should be put in Competition with the supreme, all-comprehending Interests

398 DISCOURSE XXI.

Interests of the great Jehovah? Let us consider what God is, and what we ourselves are, and then let Reason pronounce which is the best and worthiest End; the pleasing, obeying and serving God, or the pleasing ourselves, and gratifying our own Appetites? It is indeed lawful for us to have our own Ease and Interest in View, but then this must be in a regular Subordination *to the Glory of God*, as our principal End. And God hath so ordered it, that what is for the Advancement of his Honour, is also for our own truest Advantage. Nothing is more certain, than that by serving God, and promoting his Glory, we secure and promote our highest Happiness. These, when rightly understood, are never really opposed to one another. But Men, in their short-sighted Views, are often apt to oppose what they imagine to be their present fleshly Interests, to the Will and Glory of God: though this is unquestionably the most excellent End, to which no other End can be opposed, without the most manifest Breach of all the Rules of Justice and Order.

2dly, It appears that we are under indispensable Obligations to do what we do *to the Glory of God*, because this is the End for which we were created. Even the inanimate and irrational Creation glorify God objectively,

DISCOURSE XXI. 399

objectively, but without intending it. Thus *the Heavens* are said to *declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth forth his Handy-work*, as bearing the bright Impresses of God's infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness. But besides this, God made intellectual Creatures, which might be capable of glorifying him actively, and with a deliberate Choice of Heart, and Intention of Mind. He made Man upright, after his own Image, designing him to serve and honour his Maker, that he might be happy in his Favour and Love. To this End he endued him with an Understanding to know God, and contemplate his glorious Perfections, and a Will to chuse and fix upon him as his chief Good. He gave him Reason to govern and correct his inferior Appetites and Passions, and to direct his Actions to the noblest Purposes. It was for this that Man was furnished with Faculties and Capacities so vastly superior to the Brutes, that he might live proportionably to higher Ends than they. *God made us, and not we ourselves.* Psal. c. 3. and therefore we should live and act not merely unto ourselves, but unto him, and for that End for which he designed us. By being our Creator, he is our absolute Owner and Proprietor, our supreme and rightful Lord, who hath an unalienable Claim to
all

400 DISCOURSE XXI.

all the Service, Love, and Obedience, that we are capable of rendering : his Will and Law should be our Rule ; his Glory the chief End to which our Actions should be directed. As far as we do this, we answer the great End of our Being, the End we are sent into the World for, and without which we should live to no valuable Purpose at all.

3dly, We should do all for *the Glory of God*, because we are continually sustained and upheld by him in every Action, and are daily receiving manifold Benefits from his bountiful Hand. As it is God that created us at first, so it is *in him* that *we live, and move, and have our Being*. It is by a constant Influence from him that we subsist. He gave us the Power of acting, and without his providential Concourse we should not be able to put forth that Power to Exercise. What therefore can be more fit and just, than that as we act from him, so we should act for him in our daily Course ? And as we can do no Action whatsoever, but by Strength which is originally derived from him, so we should do no Action whatsoever, but in Subordination to his Glory. If we eat or drink, it is he that furnishes our Provisions, and causeth them to nourish and refresh us ; and in all our Actions of whatsoever kind,

DISCOURSE XXI. 401

natural, civil, moral, and religious, and even in our Diversions themselves; it is God that upholdeth us in the Use of our Faculties, and Powers of Body and Mind; and therefore we should take care, that all our Actions be done in a Conformity to his Will, and in a due Subserviency to his Honour, who hath granted us Life and Favour, and whose Visitation preserves our Spirits. He daily showers down numberless Benefits upon us, in the Course of his bountiful Providence: And what should be the Effect of all, but to lead us up to him, our glorious Author, Preserver, and Benefactor, and to engage us to live to him, as our chief Good and highest End?

4thly, We are obliged to *do whatsoever we do to the Glory of God*, because thus to glorify God, is the End for which we were redeemed. God had a sacred Propriety in us, and a Right to be glorified by us in our Actions, on account of his Creation, and constant Preservation of us: and this Right is farther strengthened by his having redeemed and bought us with the inestimable Price of the Blood of his only begotten Son. *Ye are not your own, saith St. Paul, for ye are bought with a Price; therefore glorify God in your Bodies and Spirits, which are his.* 1 Cor. vi. 20. We must glorify him with all the Faculties of the one, with

402 DISCOURSE XXI.

all the Members of the other, and consequently in all the Actions of both. It was for this End *Christ* died for us, that we might henceforth live, not unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us, and rose again, and through him to God our heavenly Father. He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works: and for this End he sends his Holy Spirit, to sanctify and assist us in the Performance of our Duty; and sets before us the most excellent Precepts, and exceeding great and precious Promises, and raises us to the most glorious Hopes, the Hopes of being for ever happy in his gracious Favour and blissful Presence. The Design of all this is, that we should be effectually engaged to serve and obey, and glorify him. And accordingly the Tenor of the Christian Covenant and Vow, which all *Christ's* faithful Disciples are brought under, is, that they should yield themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and their Members as Instruments of Righteousness unto God, honouring him in all their Actions, as becomes a chosen Generation, his ransomed and peculiar People, to shew forth the Praises and Virtues of their God and Saviour.

Having

DISCOURSE XXI. 403

Having thus shewn the indispenfable Obligations we are under, *whether we eat or drink, or whatfoever we do, to do all to the Glory of God,* I fhall conclude with fome fuitable Reflections.

And 1st, How juftly are thofe to be reprov'd, who are fo far from answering the Defign of this Precept, that they difhonour God, inftead of glorifying him in their Actions. Do thofe do what they do *to the Glory of God*, who allow themfelves in Actions which are forbidden in the divine Law? who blaspheme that facred Name, which they ought to reverence and adore, or at leaft treat it in a very light and unbecoming Manner? who profane God's holy Day, inftead of fanctifying it; and caft Contempt upon his Word and Ordinances? Do thofe do what they ought to do *to the Glory of God*, who allow themfelves in the Breach of Juftice, Charity, and Mercy towards their Neighbours? who injure them in their Perfons, by Acts of Violence, or defraud and over-reach them in their Dealings, or backbite and calumniate them, and fpread evil Reports to their Prejudice? Do thofe glorify God in their Actions, who indulge thofe Lufts and Works of the Flefh, which we are commanded to mortify, and which are fo contrary to that Purity and Decency which

404 DISCOURSE XXI.

becomes the Children of God, and the Disciples of the holy *Jefus*? Do those *eat and drink to the Glory of God*, who walk in Rioting and Drunkenness, and have nothing in View but the Gratification of their brutish Appetites; or who neither look up to God for a Blessing on their Food, nor are thankful to him for the Provision he makes for their daily Sustenance and Support? Can those be said to glorify God in their Actions, whose whole Life is little else than a continual Succession of Diversions and Amusements, as if this was the principal Thing they were sent into the World for? and especially who give themselves up to excessive Gaming, which, besides its being Mispende of precious Time, is generally attended with base and corrupt Practices, and is productive of the most pernicious Consequences, both to particular Persons and Families, and to the Public? Finally, Do those do what they do *to the Glory of God*, who in the general Course of their Actions make the pleasing of the Flesh, and the Advancement of their worldly Interests, and the gratifying their Ambition and Avarice, their principal ruling End, to which they direct all their Aims and Views, and which they practically prefer before the Service of God, and the promoting the Interests of his Kingdom.

And

DISCOURSE XXI. 405

And even as to those of us, whose Hearts are in the main upright towards God, and sincerely disposed and determined to serve and glorify him in the World, we have Reason to take Shame and Confusion of Face unto ourselves, when we consider how greatly we have been wanting in a due Regard to the Glory of God in our Actions? We have not fixed the Eye of our Minds on that glorious Being, so frequently, and with that Affection and Attention, which we might and ought to have done. How often have we engaged even in Actions of Moment and Importance, without a suitable Sense of our absolute Dependence upon God? Have we not been often influenced and governed in our Actions by selfish interested Ends and Views, rather than by a just Respect *to the Glory of God*, and the Edification of our Neighbour? Even in our religious Duties themselves, how many Negligences and Defects are we chargeable with, and how apt are we to take up with an outward spiritless Formality, destitute of Life and Power! It becomes us therefore, when we seriously compare our own Hearts and Lives with this most comprehensive Precept, to humble ourselves deeply before God, and earnestly to implore his pardoning Mercy, thro' *Jesus Christ*, whose Blood cleanseth from all Sin: and wherein

406 DISCOURSE XXI.

we are sensible we have been most defective, let us set ourselves heartily to rectify what has been amiss; and use our utmost Care and Diligence to approve ourselves to God in our Actions, and to do whatsoever we do to his Glory. And to assist you in this, I shall briefly mention a few Directions.

1st, See that you get your Hearts deeply affected and impressed with a Persuasion of God's glorious Perfections, his absolute Propriety in us, and Dominion over us, by Right of Creation, Preservation, and Redemption. Consider his Excellency in himself, and the Relations he stands in unto us, till you come to this as the determinate practical Resolution of your Minds; that he is most justly intitled to all the Obedience and Service you can render to him; and that you are obliged by the most sacred Ties, to glorify him in all your Actions, as far as you are capable of doing so.

2dly, You must make a sincere Dedication and Surrender of yourselves, and all that you have and are to God, through a Redeemer, upon the gracious and reasonable Terms of the Gospel Covenant. This is necessary to lay the just Foundation of an holy devoted Life. Till you thus yield up yourselves unto God, you are not properly fitted to glorify him in your Actions. This Covenant-surrender must be absolute
and

DISCOURSE XXI. 407

and unreserved, it must be entire and unfeigned, accompanied with a hearty Renunciation of the Devil, the World, and the Flesh, and of every Interest whatsoever that comes in Competition with the Honour and Duty we owe to our God and Saviour. And this Covenant-dedication should be solemnly renewed and rectified, as often as we approach the Table of the Lord.

3dly, If you would do all that you do *to the Glory of God*, you must do all that you do in the Name of *Christ*. For it is in him that our Persons and Services are accepted of God: and through him the gracious Influences of the Holy Spirit are commemorated to us. Hence the Apostle exhorts in a Passage nearly parallel to this, *Col. iii. 17. Whatsoever ye do in Word or Deed, do all in the Name of Jesus Christ, giving Thanks to God and the Father by him.*

4thly, If you would do *whatsoever ye do to the Glory of God*, you must labour to maintain a constant Sense of his all-seeing Eye, setting the Lord always before you, and endeavouring to exercise daily Communion with him. No Day should pass over us without offering up our stated Tribute of Adoration, Prayer, and Thanksgiving to God. To him we should commit all our Ways, and on him cast our

408 DISCOURSE XXI.

Burdens and our Cares. We should receive the good Things we enjoy as from his Hand, and regard the Events which befall us as ordered by his Providence. A Regard to him must mix with our worldly Employments, and with our social Converse; nor must we allow ourselves in any Actions or Affairs, or in any Enjoyments, but what we may safely, and with a good Conscience commend to his divine Blessing and gracious Acceptance. Imploping the Assistances of his Grace, we must perform the Duties of our several Stations and Relations as in his Sight, and in Conformity to his Will and Appointment; and must exercise ourselves according to our Abilities and Opportunities in doing Good, and promoting Virtue and Happiness in ourselves and others. Hereby we shall, in our narrow Sphere, comply with the great Ends of his moral Administration. We may then be said to glorify God in the Earth, and to finish the Work that he hath given us to do, and to serve our Generation according to his Will. And thus to endeavour to glorify God is the surest Way we can take to promote our own true Honours and Interest. For the greatest Honour a reasonable Creature is capable of, is to be an Instrument in honouring and obeying his Maker.

And

DISCOURSE XXI. 409

And a Life thus employed is not only the most honourable, but the most comfortable and delightful Life, even in this present State. No Pleasures arising from worldly Affluence or sensual Enjoyments can be compared to the divine Satisfaction which floweth from a Sense of God's Acceptance and Approbation, and from a Consciousness that we are engaged in a Course of Action which is agreeable to his Will, and which he in his rich and sovereign Grace and Goodness will abundantly reward. And this leads me to the last Thing I would observe, which is, that if we now make it our earnest Care and Endeavour to *do whatsoever we do to the Glory of God*; and therefore to glorify him on the Earth, we shall enjoy him for ever in Heaven. He will graciously crown our sincere Aims and faithful Endeavours for the Advancement of his Honour, with a transcendent Glory and Felicity in his own immediate Presence and Kingdom above, throughout the boundless Ages of Eternity.

On being Followers of God.

DISCOURSE XXII.

EPHESIANS V. I.

Be ye therefore Followers of God, as dear Children.

NOTHING can possibly give us a nobler Idea of the Nature and Excellency of true Religion, than that it is designed to raise us to a Conformity to God himself, the holiest and best of Beings, the supreme Original of Perfection and Happiness. *Be ye perfect, saith our Saviour, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.* Not as if it were possible for us to attain to an equal Degree of Perfection

412 DISCOURSE XXII.

tion with God himself, which it were the highest Impiety and Folly to imagine; but we must, as far as we are able, make it our continual Care and earnest Endeavour to resemble him more and more in those amiable Excellencies in which he is imitable by such Creatures as we are. And to engage us to this is the Design of this important and comprehensive Exhortation of the Apostle; *Be ye Followers*, or as it might properly and literally be rendered, ‘*Be ye Imitators, of God, as dear Children*’: where it is plainly implied, both that all true Christians are in a special Sense the Children of God, and that as such, they are obliged to endeavour to imitate and resemble him.

In treating of this Passage I shall, first, offer something concerning the Character by which true Christians are here described, that they are God’s *dear Children*.

Secondly, I shall enquire into the true Meaning and Extent of the Exhortation here given, or what is included in our being *Followers* and *Imitators of God*; and shall shew the Obligations we are under to be so.

1st, Let us consider the Character by which true Christians are here described, that they are God’s *dear Children*. The Persons whom the Apostle here honours with
with

DISCOURSE XXII. 413

with this glorious Character, are those, whom in the Beginning of this Epistle he calls, *the Saints which are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus*. And the Character equally belongeth to all that in every Place believe in *Jesus Christ*, and love and obey him in Sincerity.

There is indeed a general Sense in which all Mankind may be said to be the Children of God, in as much as he is the Author of their Beings, from whom they derive their Existence in a far properer and nobler Sense than they do from their earthly Parents. To him we owe the wonderful and curious Frame of our Bodies, and he is the Father of our Spirits. He giveth us Life, and Breath, and all Things, and on him we continually depend. In this Sense he may be said to be the God and Father of the whole human Race. We are all his Offspring, as *St. Paul* observes to the *Athenians* by a Quotation from one of their own Poets. *Acts xvii. 29.* And on this Account we are obliged to love, obey, and honour him.

But it is not merely in this Sense that the Character of God's dear Children is to be understood in this Passage. Every one that is acquainted with the New Testament must be sensible, that *Christ's* faithful Disciples are there represented as
the

414 DISCOURSE XXII.

the Children of God in a higher and more eminent Sense, in which that Character is not equally applicable to all Mankind. It is frequently spoken of as a glorious Privilege, of which all true Christians are Partakers, and which is owing to the sovereign Grace and free Love of God our heavenly Father through *Jesus Christ*. *Behold, saith St. John, what Manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God.* And he adds, *Beloved, now are we the Sons of God.* 1 John iii. 1, 2. Now in this present State we Christians, the true Disciples and living Members of the holy *Jesus*, are the Sons of God. And it is frequently signified, that it is through *Jesus Christ*, the Son of his Love, that God admitteth us to this valuable Privilege. To this Purpose we are told, that God hath *predestinated us to the Adoption of Children by Jesus Christ unto himself.* Ephes. i. 5. And that *when the Fulness of the Time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a Woman, made under the Law, that we might obtain the Adoption of Sons.* Gal. iv. 4, 5. Accordingly St. *John* observeth, that *to as many as received him, to them gave he Power, or 'a Right,' to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name.* John i. 12. We had by our Apostacy from God
for-

DISCOURSE XXII. 415

forfeited all Interest in his Favour, and cast ourselves out from the Privileges of his Family. The whole human Race had fallen from their original Glory, from the Image and Favour of God, into a wretched State of Sin and Misery. They became alienated from the Life of God, and were estranged and far off from him. But God hath, in his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, sent his own Son into the World, and hath appointed him to the glorious Work of recovering us from our ruinous and lost Estate. And upon our receiving *Christ Jesus*, this great appointed Saviour, with a true and living Faith productive of good Works, and heartily complying with the gracious Design of his Undertaking, we are brought into a State of Favour with God, and into the dear and honourable Relation of his Children.

Nor is this a mere nominal Relation; all those to whom this Character truly belongeth are regenerated by his Grace and Spirit, and are made Partakers of a divine Nature, as *St. Peter* nobly expresseth it. They have a happy sanctifying Change wrought upon their Souls, with regard to which they are said, in the emphatical Language of holy Writ, to become new Men, and new Creatures, and to be born again, and born from above. They are

416 DISCOURSE XXII.

born, as St. *John* says, *not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God.* John i. 13. to signify that this is not owing to the mere Powers of unassisted Nature, but to the gracious Operations of God's Holy Spirit. Accordingly they are said to be *born of the Spirit.* John iii. 5, 6. To the same Purpose it is observed by St. *James*, that of *his own Will hath God begotten us with the Word of Truth.* Jam. i. 18. Where it is intimated, that as God by his Spirit, of his own free Goodness, is the principal Efficient; so the Word by its Doctrines, Precepts, and Promises, is the main Instrument in effecting this great Change. And the same Thing is signified by St. *Peter*, when he saith, that we are *born again, not of corruptible Seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.* 1 Pet. i. 23. and he addeth, *This is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.* Ver. 25. This Word of God received into the Heart becometh a living Principle there, a Principle of all Holiness and Goodness, the Principle of a spiritual and divine Life. And he that is thus *born of God*, the Apostle *John* tells us, *doth not commit Sin*, i. e. doth not go on in a Course of wilful presumptuous Sin and Disobedience; *for his Seed remaineth*

DISCOURSE XXII. 417

eth, in him, i. e. those holy and divine Dispositions which are wrought in his Soul, are Principles of a permanent abiding Nature, so that, as it is there added, *he cannot sin because he is born of God.* 1 John iii. 9. And he had before observed, *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doth Righteousness is born of him.* 1 John ii. 29. And those who are in this Sense the Children of God, are the Objects of his special Love and Favour, as the Apostle signifieth when he here calleth them God's dear Children. They are dear to God, his beloved, in whom he taketh a peculiar Complacency above the rest of Mankind. They have their Fellowship or Communion with the Father, and with his Son *Jesus Christ*. He sendeth his Holy Spirit to dwell in them, to assist, guide, and comfort them. *Because ye are Sons,* saith St. Paul, *God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts, crying, Abba, Father.* Gal. iv. 6. He granteth them a Liberty of Access to the Throne of his Grace, so that they can come with an ingenuous Freedom and Affiance as Children to a Father. He provideth for them whatsoever he seeth to be really needful, and causeth all Things to work together for their Good. And finally, he giveth them a Right and Title to a glorious

418 DISCOURSE XXII.

heavenly Inheritance. For if we be *Children*, then are we *Heirs*, *Heirs of God*, and *Joint-heirs with Christ*. Rom. viii. 17. *Heirs according to the Hope of eternal Life*. Tit. iii. 7.

Having considered the Character by which true Christians are here described, that they are God's *dear Children*, let us proceed,

Secondly, To inquire into the true Meaning and Extent of the Exhortation here given, *Be ye Followers*, or 'Imitators', *of God, as dear Children*.

And that we may have a right Notion of what is included in our being *Followers*, or *Imitators, of God*, it is proper to observe,

1st, That there are peculiar Perfections and Prerogatives of the Deity, with regard to which God is not properly imitable by us. He is the eternal self-existent Jehovah, who existeth necessarily from everlasting to everlasting. His Power is almighty and irresistible, whereby he created this vast Universe out of Nothing, and doeth all Things according to the Counsel of his Will. He filleth Heaven and Earth with the Immensity of his Presence. His Omniscience comprehendeth all Things at once, past, present, and to come. His Dominion is absolute, and he ruleth all Things
with

DISCOURSE XXII. 419

with an uncontrolled Sovereignty, and none can call him to an Account, or say unto him, *What doest thou?* In these Things it were the greatest Folly and Presumption for any Creature to pretend to an Imitation of the Deity. An undue Affectation of being like God in his Sovereignty and Independency seems to have been the Sin of the Devils, which cast them down from their first Habitation. And something of this Kind entered into the Sin of our first Parents. They were not content with the Rank assigned them; they wanted to be their own Lords: *Ye shall be as Gods,* was the Temptation which prevailed on them, and flattered their Ambition. And ever since Men have been too prone to affect a Kind of Deity and Independency. They are for making themselves their ultimate End, and their own Wish and Appetites their Rule, and are ready to say in their Hearts, *Who is Lord over us?* As if they had a Right to think, speak, and act as they please, without being accountable to any Superior. They have often been for arrogating to themselves a Kind of Omniscience. Not content with the Knowledge of those Things that belong to them, they would also know those secret Things which belong to God. They are for as-

420 DISCOURSE XXII.

suming an universal Comprehension, as if they had a Right to have all the divine Councils laid open to them, and were able to grasp Infinity itself. To affect to be like God in such Respects as these, is to break from the regular Subordination of Creatures. And what a strange Perversity is it, not to endeavour after a Conformity to God in those Excellencies and Perfections in which it is our Honour and Happiness to imitate him, and yet to affect a Resemblance of him in those Instances in which it is the most criminal Presumption to attempt it!

Our Duty, with respect to such Perfections and Prerogatives of the Deity as have been mentioned, is not to aspire to an Imitation of them, but to adore him on the Account of them with the profoundest Reverence, and to carry towards him with such Affections and Dispositions of Mind as becometh us towards a Being possessed of such unparalleled Perfections and Prerogatives. It is very useful frequently to consider his necessary eternal Existence, his absolute Supremacy and Independency, his Immensity, Omniscience, and Omnipotency, which are usually called his natural or physical Attributes, as distinguished from his moral, in order to fill us with the most awful admiring
Thoughts

DISCOURSE XXII. 421

Thoughts of that incomprehensible Jehovah, and with the most humbling Sense of the infinite Distance there is between him and us ; yea, and between him and the most glorious and exalted of all created Beings. Oh with what profound Submission and Veneration of Soul should we prostrate ourselves at the Footstool of the great, the adorable I am, the immense, the self-existent God, sinking into the Dust before him for the Fear of the Lord, and the Glory of his Majesty, and acknowledging that we are in his Sight as nothing, yea even less than nothing, and Vanity ! With what a devout Astonishment should we cry out, *Thou art God, and there is none other besides thee ! Who in the Heavens can be compared unto the Lord ? or who among the Sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord ? Canst thou by searching find out God ? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto Perfection ?*

2dly, When we are urged to be Followers or Imitators of God, it is to be understood of our endeavouring after a Conformity to him in his amiable moral Excellencies. It is in these that he proposeth himself to our Imitation ; and in these it is our Privilege and Glory to resemble him. It is true, that even with regard to these, there must be acknowledged to be a vast and

422 DISCOURSE XXII.

ineffable Disproportion between God and us. As he is infinite, so all his Perfections and Attributes, even those we call his moral ones, are infinite too. And therefore those moral Perfections, as they are in him, must be infinitely superior to the Shadows and Resemblances of them which are to be observed in us, or in any, the most excellent, of his reasonable Creatures. And there are also some Things which are just and right in him, considered as the sovereign Lord of the Universe, which would not be fit and proper for us, in the Relations we bear as his Creatures and Subjects. But still it is certain, that making proper Allowances for the necessary Difference between the infinite *Jehovah* and such Beings as we are, it is possible for us to bear a real Conformity to him in his illustrious moral Perfections. And as far as we do, so we may be said to be like him, or to imitate and resemble him in such a Measure and Degree, as is suited to the Order of our Being. This Conformity and Resemblance is only to be found in reasonable Creatures, moral Agents. And that we may have a more distinct Notion wherein it doth consist, I shall make particular Mention of some of those Instances, wherein we are more especially concerned to aspire to an Imitation of the Deity.

And

DISCOURSE XXII. 423

And ist, God is a Being of infinite Holiness and spotless Purity, who hateth Sin with a perfect Hatred; and our being *Followers of God, as dear Children*, includeth our endeavouring to resemble him by a real universal Holiness of Heart and Life, and a prevailing Abhorrence and Detestation of Sin. There is scarce any one Character by which God is more frequently described in the sacred Writings, than that he is the Holy One, holy by Way of Eminency. This is represented as his Glory. *Who is like unto thee, O Lord, saith Moses in his triumphal Song, glorious in Holiness!* Exod. xv. 11. Under this Character the Angels celebrate and adore him, saying with the profoundest Reverence, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts!* And the Saints are exhorted to give Thanks at the Remembrance of his Holiness. This Holiness of God is not so much to be understood of any one particular Perfection, as of the universal Rectitude of his Nature. It includeth the pure Light of his infinite Mind, whereby he hath a clear and perfect Comprehension of all the moral Reasons and Relations of Things, and knoweth in every Instance and Circumstance what is fittest and best. And it also includeth the perfect Rectitude of his Will, whereby he is invariably inclined and determined to that which appeareth to

424 DISCOURSE XXII.

his own infinite Understanding to be good, and pure, and excellent. Hence he hath an eternal and immutable Love of Order and moral Goodness, and an eternal Aversion to all moral Evil. We are told that he is *of purer Eyes than to behold Evil*, and that he *cannot look on Iniquity*. Habak. i. 13. *i. e.* he cannot look upon it without the utmost Abhorrence. He hath taken many Ways to manifest his Hatred against Sin, by the Declaration of his Word, the Threatnings of his Law, and the Dispen-sations of his Providence. Not the least Stain of moral Corruption or Defilement can cleave to his infinite Mind. No irregular Affections, no corrupt Appetites and Passions, can possibly have Place there. And with regard to this it is justly said of God, that he *is Light*, and *in him is no Darknes at all*: no Darknes, either of Ignorance or Impurity.

Now this his Purity and Holiness is that in which we are especially required to aspire after a Conformity to him. It is the Command of God, *Be ye holy, for I am holy*. And again, we are exhorted to *be holy, as he who hath called us is holy in all manner of Conversation*. 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. In our present corrupt and degenerate State, our Natures, Body and Soul, are defiled and unclean, till renewed and regenerated by the Spirit

DISCOURSE XXII. 425

Spirit and Grace of God. Sin hath spread its polluting Influence through all our Faculties and Powers. But if we would approve ourselves the dear Children of God, we must through his gracious Assistances, which will not be wanting to our fervent Prayers and sincere Endeavours, cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit. We must not content ourselves with some particular good Qualities, or a partial Reformation, but must labour after an universal Rectitude and Purity of Heart and Life. We must endeavour to get our Minds enlightened, and formed to a just Discernment of the moral Differences of Things, and our Wills steadily disposed and determined to approve, embrace, practise, and pursue, that which we see and know to be pure, and lovely, and virtuous, and praise-worthy. We must no longer, as we are prone to do, delight in Sin, or roll it as a sweet Morfel under our Tongues; but it must be the Object of our just Detestation, as it is of God's. We must hate it for its own intrinsic Malignity and Demerit, and for its absolute Contrariety to his holy Nature and Will. It is true, there will still be some Remains of Corruption cleaving to us in this imperfect State, but we must strive against them more and more; and not for any Considerations of sensual Pleasure,

426 DISCOURSE XXII.

sure, or worldly Gain, allow ourselves in any Course of known presumptuous Sin, or harbour and indulge any darling Iniquity in our Bosoms. It must be our constant Care and Endeavour to watch against the Temptations to which we are exposed, to mortify the Body of Sin more and more, and to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God.

2dly, God is represented in Scripture as a Being of impartial Justice, and perfect Righteousness and Equity. Righteousness in the largest Sense is of the same Import with universal Holiness ; but at present I take it, as it is often taken, in a more narrow and limited Sense, as signifying Justice, and a Disposition to render that which is right and due to every one, and that in an equitable Proportion. And this also is an Attribute frequently ascribed to God in the sacred Writings. He is often represented as the most just and righteous Governor of the World. *Is there Unrighteousness with God?* saith St. Paul: *God forbid.* Rom. ix. 14. *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* Gen. xviii. 25. There is no Respect of Persons with him : but he rendereth to every Man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings. Even when *Clouds and Darkeness are round about him*, and we cannot penetrate into the Reasons of his Dispensation, yet still

DISCOURSE XXII. 427

we are sure that *Righteousness and Judgment are the Habitation, or Establishment, of his Throne.* Psal. xcvi. 2. *Wilt thou condemn him that is most just ?* saith *Elibu*: and he representeth it as a monstrous Absurdity, to suppose that the *Almighty* would *pervert Judgment.* Job xxxiv. 12, 17. *For, as he there observeth, the Work of a Man will be render unto him, and cause every Man to find according to his Ways.* Ver. 11. All his Dispensations are guided by the steady Rules of Righteousness and Equity; from which nothing can ever mislead or bias him: no partial Affections, no unaccountable Humour or Caprice, no narrow selfish Interests. Now in this we should endeavour, as far as in us lieth, to imitate and resemble him. Those of the Sons of Men who are in exalted Stations, and invested with Power and Dominion, as Princes and Magistrates, are in a particular Manner obliged to imitate God in the Righteousness and Equity of their Administrations. They should execute Judgment with an equal and impartial Hand, and keep at the remotest Distance from all Injustice and Oppression. And all Men in general should in their several Stations be careful to do justly, and render unto all their Dues, not allowing themselves to withhold from any their Right, or to wrong and defraud their

428 DISCOURSE XXII.

their Brother in any Matter. This is an Instance of Conformity to God, which is absolutely necessary, if we would act up to the Character of his Children. For in this the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil. *Whosoever doth not Righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his Brother.* 1 John iii. 10.

The Faithfulness and Truth of God is another of those Attributes, in which we should aspire to an Imitation of him. But especially we should endeavour to resemble him in his Love and Goodness. But the Consideration of this, and some other Things relating to this Subject, must be reserved for another Opportunity.



On being Followers of God.

DISCOURSE XXIII.

EPHESIANS V. I.

Be ye Followers of God, as dear Children.

IN a former Discourse of this remarkable Passage, I first considered the Character by which true Christians are here described, that they are *God's dear Children*. And then proceeded to enquire into the true Meaning and Extent of the important Exhortation here given, *Be ye Followers*, or as the Word might literally be rendered, 'Be ye Imitators' of *God, as dear Children*. And after having observed, that there are peculiar Perfections and Prerogatives belonging to the Supreme Being, in which it were
the

430 DISCOURSE XXIII.

the most criminal Folly and Presumption to affect an Imitation of him ; it was shewn, that the imitating or following God, to which we are here exhorted, is to be understood of endeavouring after a Conformity to him in his amiable moral Excellencies. And particularly we must endeavour, as far as in us lieth, to resemble him in his Purity and Holiness, and Detestation against Sin ; and in his impartial Justice, Righteousness, and Equity.

I now observe farther, that another of those Attributes in which we should aspire after a Conformity to God our heavenly Father, is his Faithfulness and Truth. He is described by this Character, that he is *the God of Truth*. And we are told that *the Truth of the Lord endureth for ever*, and that *his Faithfulness is unto all Generations* : that he *keepeth Covenant* ; and that *all his Promises are Yea and Amen*, *i. e.* they are faithful and true, and shall most certainly be accomplished in the proper Season. We are assured that it is *impossible for God to lie*, as being absolutely inconsistent with the essential Rectitude and Perfection of his Nature : that *he loveth Truth in the inward Parts*, and that *lying Lips are an Abomination unto the Lord*. If therefore we would approve ourselves the Children of God, we must get ourselves

4

possessed

DISCOURSE XXIII. 431

possessed with a Love of Truth, and shew a sacred Regard to it in the whole of our Conversation. We must put away from us all Hypocrisy and Guile, all Falshood and Dissimulation, and must have our *Loins girt about with Truth*, as the Apostle expresseth it, *Eph. vi. 14.* An amiable Simplicity and godly Sincerity must influence and govern our whole Department, as opposed to what is in Scripture called a *double Heart*, and a *double Tongue*. It is mentioned as a necessary Part of the Character of a good Man, *who shall abide in the Tabernacle of God, and dwell in his holy Hill, that he walketh uprightly,—and speaketh the Truth in his Heart; and that he sweareth to his own Hurt, and changeth not.* Psal. xv. 1, 2, 4. And on the contrary, Falshood and Deceit are represented as the black Lineaments of Satan's Image, whose Character it is, that *he is a Liar, and the Father of it.* John viii. 44.

But that which ought especially to be considered, when we are inquiring what is included in our being Followers or Imitators of God, is that we should endeavour after a Conformity to him in Love and Goodness. There cannot be a nobler and more inviting Description of the Deity, than that which is given us by St *John*, 1 John iv. 8. *God is Love.* He is not only
good

432 DISCOURSE XXIII.

good and kind, but he is Love and Goodness itself; it is his very Nature, as well as Delight. He is infinitely happy in himself, and in the Fulness of his own Perfection: yet such is the Goodness and Bignity of his Nature, that he delighteth in the free and liberal Communications of his own Fulness. It was this that moved him to give Existence to numberless Orders of Beings, and to make Provision for them according to the Powers and Capacities he hath furnished them with. His Goodness is wide as this vast Universe, diffusing its beneficial Influences through Heaven and Earth. It is an overflowing Fountain from whence those Streams of Blessings proceed, which refresh and make glad the Creation of God. But especially he hath manifested his Goodness towards us of the human Race, and that even in our corrupt and degenerate State. The Goodness of God as exercised towards guilty sinful Creatures, who had offended him by their Transgressions, is called his Mercy; Mercy, that amiable Attribute by which he is so often described and celebrated in the sacred Writings. We are told that *he delighteth in Mercy*. Mic. vii. 18. It was this that prompted him to send his own Son into the World, to redeem and save us from the Miseries and Ruins we had brought upon

DISCOURSE XXIII. 433

ourselves, by our Apostacy and Disobedience, and to die for us whilst we were yet Enemies. It is this that hath induced him to enter into a gracious Covenant with us, in which he offereth Pardon and Salvation upon the most merciful and condescending Terms. How amiable is that Name and Character by which he hath proclaimed himself, *the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth, forgiving Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin.* Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. He often long beareth even with obstinate presumptuous Sinners, and exerciseth great Patience towards them, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance. He causeth his Sun to shine, and his Rain to descend, not only upon the just, but upon the unjust, and doeth Good in the Methods of his common bountiful Providence, even to the unthankful and the evil. But he taketh a special Complacency in those who lay hold of his offered Grace, and who are renewed after his Image in Righteousness and true Holiness. To these he giveth the most amazing Proofs of his distinguishing Love and Goodness, and will crown their sincere, though imperfect Obedience, with the glorious Reward of Life everlasting, that they may be happy in him to all Eternity.

434 DISCOURSE XXIII.

Now this Goodness, Love, and Mercy of God, is what we are particularly obliged to imitate. Hence, immediately after the Exhortation in the Text, *Be ye Followers, or Imitators, of God as dear Children*, it is added, *and walk in Love*. Our Love must in the first Place be fixed upon God, the best of Beings, the supreme, the infinite Good: this must be the noble governing Principle in our Souls, guiding and overruling all the inferior Affections: and then through him our Love must be carried forth towards his Creatures, and towards those most in whom we see most of his lovely Image. Our Delight should be in the excellent of the Earth, and we should love them as Brethren with a pure Heart, fervently. But though we ought to bear a special Affection towards them, our Benevolence must not be confined to them, but must extend to the whole human Race. We must, in Conformity to God, be ready to do Good unto all, as far as the Sphere of our Ability reacheth, to supply their Wants, to assist them with our kind Offices, and succour them in their Distresses; or at least, if we can do no more, they should have a Share in our kind Wishes, and in our Prayers; not excepting even our Enemies themselves, and those that have injured us. For hereby we shall become *the*

DISCOURSE XXIII. 435

Children of the Highest, and shall shew ourselves *merciful, as our Father*, which is in Heaven, *is merciful*: which is what our Saviour exhorteth to. *Luke vi. 35, 36.* We must endeavour to subdue our Resentments, and to be slow to Anger, and ready to forgive, which argueth a godlike Disposition, and is a Character by which God is frequently described in the sacred Writings. And this is what the Apostle seemeth here to have particularly in View. For in the Words preceding the Text he saith, *Let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking be put away from you, with all Malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's Sake hath forgiven you.* And then it follows, *Be ye therefore Imitators of God, as dear Children.*

What hath been offered may suffice for explaining the Meaning and Extent of the Exhortation in the Text, or what is included in our being Followers or Imitators of God. And that we are under indispensable Obligations to endeavour to imitate and resemble him in the Sense already explained, needs no laborious Proof. Those moral Perfections of God, in which we are called to an Imitation of him, are in themselves most amiable and excellent, deserving the highest Affection and Esteem

436 DISCOURSE XXIII.

of reasonable Beings. If it be our Duty to follow after the Things which are true, and just, and pure, and venerable, and lovely, then certainly we are never so worthily employed, as when we are endeavouring, as far as we are capable of it, to resemble the best of Beings, the great Archetype and Original of moral Goodness and Excellence. This is what we are obliged to as reasonable Beings, but especially as we are Christians, who profess to be, in a special Sense, the Children of God. It is by this that we shall prove our heavenly Extraction, that we are indeed born of God, and are made Partakers of a divine Nature. And it is by this that we shall shew, that we love him in Sincerity, as becometh his dear Children. To profess to be the Children of God, and not to love him with all our Hearts, is a manifest Inconsistency. And can we love him, and not endeavour to resemble him? A sincere and superlative Love will naturally draw us to an Imitation of him, and tend to form our Souls into his amiable Likeness. Add to this, that it is what he himself expressly requireth of us in his holy Word. And what a Condescension is it in so glorious a Being, that he not only alloweth, but commandeth us to aspire after a Conformity to him in his illustrious moral Perfections,

and

DISCOURSE XXIII. 437

and is pleased to propose himself to us as the Object of our Imitation. He requireth this of us, because he delighteth in our Happiness. And shall not we esteem it our greatest Privilege, as well as Duty, to obey so excellent a Command? Especially since the more effectually to engage and assist us to do so, God hath been pleased to send his own Son into the World, the living unspotted Image of his own Goodness and Purity, who hath shewn us in his own sacred Life and Practice what it is to be like God; and in whom the amiable Excellencies of the Deity are brought nearer to our View, and more within the Reach of our Imitation.

And now that we may make a right Improvement of what hath been said on this Subject, it highly concerneth us to examine and try ourselves, whether, and how far we have endeavoured to answer the Design of this important Exhortation, by following and imitating God as becometh his dear Children. He is a Being of infinite Holiness and spotless Purity. Do we in some Measure resemble him in this? Can we say that we really hate and abhor Sin as the worst of Evils, and that it is our earnest Desire and Endeavour to cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit? Is universal Honour

438 DISCOURSE XXIII.

what we aspire unto as the greatest Glory of our Natures? and is it this which recommendeth Heaven itself to our Souls, that there we shall be made perfect in Holiness? Or, on the other Hand, do we really delight in Sin, and roll it as a sweet morsel under our Tongue? Are not the prevailing Affections and Dispositions of our Hearts carnal and impure? Is there not some beloved Lust, some darling Iniquity which we cherish and indulge in our Bosoms? Again, God is a Being of impartial Justice and Righteousness, of invariable Faithfulness and Truth. Do we in Conformity to him make it our constant Endeavour to do justly, and to render unto all their Dues? Are we true and faithful in our Words and Promises, sincere in the inward Disposition of our Minds, and averse to all Falshood and Guile? Or, on the contrary, are we unrighteous and unjust, ready, if we have Opportunity, to defraud and over-reach our Neighbour, if we can serve our own private Interest by it? Are we among those that love and make a Lie, false and insincere in our Dealings towards God or Man? Again, God is a Being of infinite Love and Goodness, slow to Anger, and of great Mercy. Do we therefore delight in doing Good in Imitation of that glorious and beneficent Being?

DISCOURSE XXIII. 439

Being? Are we patient and merciful, as our heavenly Father is merciful, kind and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God for *Christ's* Sake hath forgiven us? Or, on the contrary, are we of a narrow selfish Disposition, prone to envy the Welfare of our Fellow-creatures, instead of rejoicing in their Happiness, and endeavouring to promote it? Are we of an implacable unforgiving Temper of Mind, taking a malignant Pleasure in the Exercise of Malice and Revenge?

Thus should we try ourselves whether we are Followers of God; and by this we may form a proper Judgment concerning our own State. If our Hearts condemn us not, then we may have Confidence towards God, and may rejoice in the Character and Privileges of his Children. But if we do not find the Lineaments of his blessed Image upon our Souls, we have great Reason to lament our degenerate State and Frame, acknowledging that God might justly cast us away from his gracious Presence. With penitent and contrite Hearts we should confess before him our great Guilt and Unworthiness, humbly imploring his pardoning Mercy. And we should be earnest in our Applications to him for the sanctifying Influences of his Holy Spirit: that he would create in us clean
Hearts,

440 DISCOURSE XXIII.

Hearts, and renew us in the Spirit of our Minds, that we may be formed into his divine Likeness. And to our Prayers we must add diligent Endeavours in the Use of all proper Means on our Parts. Particularly we must set ourselves heartily to mortify and subdue all sensual and inordinate Affections and Lusts, than which nothing hath a greater Tendency to deface the divine Image in our Souls. And let us often contemplate God's amiable moral Perfections, especially in the affecting Descriptions that are given us of them in his holy Word. Nothing can be more useful than frequently to fix our Views on that infinitely perfect Being, and the glorious Discoveries he hath made to us of his Holiness, Righteousness, Goodness, and Truth. Thus to realize him to our Minds in the Meditations of Faith would have a happy Influence to transform us into his Likeness. And since, as was before hinted, our Lord *Jesus Christ* was the brightest Image of the invisible Deity, let us be often looking unto *Jesus*, and set his Example before us as our Pattern. The more we endeavour to have the same Mind in us that was in him, and to walk as he walked, the nearer shall we be brought to a Conformity to God himself.

I shall

DISCOURSE XXIII. 441

I shall conclude with offering two or three Considerations which may serve as so many powerful Motives to enforce the Exhortation upon us.

And 1st, To imitate and follow God is the highest Glory and Perfection of the reasonable Nature. As God is the supreme Original and Source of all Perfection, in whom is to be found every Thing that is truly excellent, glorious, venerable, and lovely, in the highest possible Degree of Eminency; so it is evident, that the more any reasonable Creature resembleth that great Original, the more valuable and truly excellent that Creature is. It was the Glory of Man in his primitive State, and his noblest Distinction above the inferior Brute Animals, that he was made after the Image of God. And when by his Apostacy and Disobedience, this Image became sadly defaced, he with it lost his Happiness and Glory. To restore this blessed Image was one great Design of God's sending his Son, and communicating his Holy Spirit. And when the Soul is again renewed after the divine Image by the Spirit and Grace of God, it begins again to recover its Glory and Beauty, and to answer the original Design of its Creation. Then doth God look upon it with Complacency, and the blessed

442 DISCOURSE XXIII.

fed Angels with Wonder and Joy behold the divine Image again shining forth in the human Nature. It is then raised to a noble Dignity, and hath a solid Foundation laid for inward Happiness and Self-enjoyment.

2dly, It should farther engage us to be Followers of God in his imitable moral Perfections, to consider that this is the best Way we can take to glorify him here below, and to shew forth his Praises and Virtues. We then honour God in the properest Manner, when we as it were become the living Images of the Deity, in whom the divine Goodness, Holiness, and Truth, shine with an amiable Lustre. This is the Glory he justly expecteth from his dear Children, whom he hath in a special Manner chosen to himself; and hereby they shew the Power of his Grace, the Reality and Excellency of true Religion, and make a lovely Representation of him to the World.

3dly, Let it be considered, that if we endeavour to be Followers and Imitators of God here on Earth, we shall be fitted for the immediate Vision and eternal Enjoyment of him in the heavenly State. Those only that are in some Degree like God here, shall hereafter see him as he is. If we now, with a pious Ambition,
aspire

DISCOURSE XXIII. 443

aspire to a Conformity to God our heavenly Father, as far as we are capable of attaining to it; if from Day to Day we endeavour to grow up more and more into his blessed Likeness, in universal Holiness and Righteousness, in Faithfulness and Truth, in beneficent Goodness, Love, and Mercy; we may be said to have Heaven brought down to our Souls in some happy Beginnings here on Earth. This will be a comforting Evidence to us that we are the dear Children of God, and Heirs of the heavenly Inheritance, and that when we depart hence, we shall be for ever with the Lord. He who hath begun to form us into his own divine Likeness, will perfect the glorious Work in us, and raise us in the fittest Season to his own beatific Presence and Bosom, that we may rest and rejoice in him to all Eternity. Upon the whole, we may be assured, that they who make it their earnest Endeavour to follow and imitate God in his moral Excellencies in this present State, these are the Persons that shall in the heavenly World behold his Face in Righteousness, and shall be perfectly satisfied with his Likeness.

THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

