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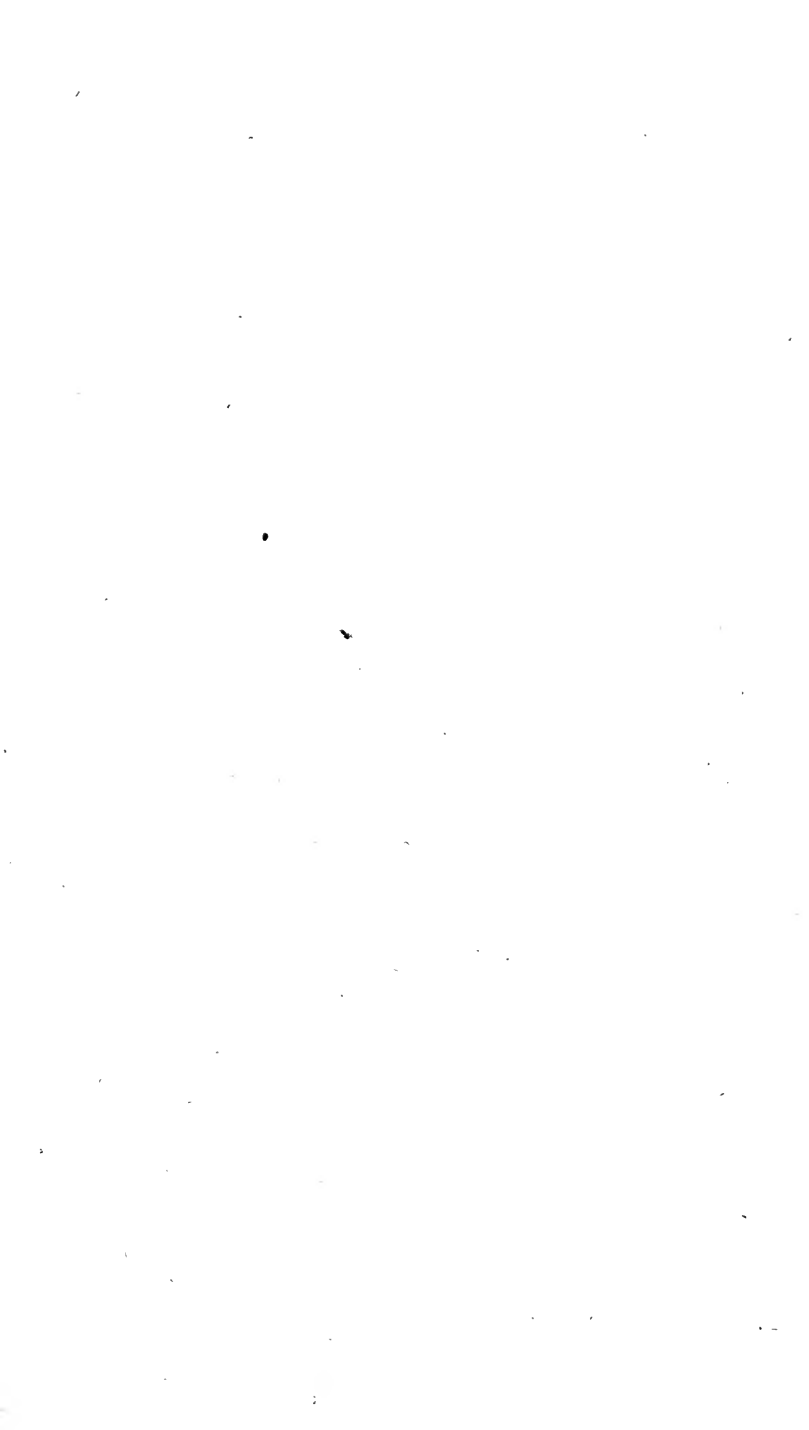
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DISCOURSES

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

By the late REVEREND

JOHN LELAND, D. D.

THE THIRD VOLUME.

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M D C C L X I X .

C O N T E N T S

O F T H E

T H I R D V O L U M E.

D I S C O U R S E S I, II.

On the Delight a good Man has in the
Contemplation of God and his glorious
Perfections.

P S A L M xxxvii. 4.

*Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give
thee the Desires of thine Heart. Pages 1, 19*

D I S C O U R S E III.

On Delighting in God's Works of Crea-
tion.

P S A L M cxi. 2.

*The Works of the Lord are great, sought of
all them that have Pleasure therein. P. 45.*

The CONTENTS.

DISCOURSE IV.

On Delighting in God's Works of Providence.

PSALM cxi. 2.

The Works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have Pleasure therein. P. 69

DISCOURSE V.

On Delighting in the gracious Methods of our Redemption by *Jesus Christ*.

ROMANS v. 11.

— *We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*— P. 91

DISCOURSE VI.

On Delighting in the gracious Methods of our Redemption by *Jesus Christ*.

ROMANS v. 11.

We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the Atone-ment.

P. 107

DIS-

The CONTENTS.

DISCOURSE VII.

On Delighting in the gracious Methods of
our Redemption by *Jesus Christ*.

ROMANS V. 11.

— *We joy in God through our Lord Jesus
Christ.*— P. 131

DISCOURSES VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV.

On Delighting in the Laws of God.

PSALM cxix. 47.

*I will delight myself in thy Commandments,
which I have loved.* P. 151, 171, 191,
209, 227, 255, 277

DISCOURSES XV, XVI.

On Rejoicing in Hope of the Glory of
God.

ROMANS V. 2.

— *And rejoice in Hope of the Glory of
God.* P. 303, 325
DIS-

The CONTENTS.

DISCOURSES XVII, XVIII.

Prejudices against Religion removed, and the Practice of Piety and Virtue recommended, as the highest Pleasure and Delight.

PROVERBS iii. 17.

Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace. P. 345, 363

DISCOURSES XIX, XX, XXI.

On the Credibility and Proofs of the Gospel-Records.

JOHN xx. 30, 31.

And many other Things truly did Jesus in the Presence of his Disciples, which are not written in this Book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have Life through his Name. P. 379, 401, 427

On

*On the Delight a good Man has in the
Contemplation of God and his glorious
Perfections.*

DISCOURSE I.

P S A L M xxxvii. 4.

*Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give
thee the Desires of thine Heart.*

OF all the Prejudices that are apt to render Men averse to Religion, there is none more common, or which hath a more pernicious Influence than this, that they look upon it as an Enemy to the Pleasure and Satisfaction of human Life. They represent it to themselves a gloomy and melancholy Thing,

four and unfociable, in which no Pleasure or Enjoyment is to be found, nothing that can yield an agreeable Entertainment in this present State. Whilst Persons are under the Power of such Prejudices, the Arguments and Motives of Religion are in a great Measure lost upon them. When they form such a disagreeable and unamiable Idea of a religious and virtuous Life, as if it were inconsistent with their present Happiness, scarce will the Promise of Heaven itself allure them to it; especially when it is regarded as a State of consummate Holiness and Purity.

It is therefore of great Importance to endeavour to get our Minds divested of these Prejudices against Religion, and brought to a high Estimation of it, and Delight in it; and to this Purpose we should endeavour to fix our Views upon its Excellency and Loveliness, to represent it to our Minds in an agreeable and amiable which is its true and proper Light, and to behold it in its own lovely Form, and in the beautiful Harmony of all its Parts, all conspiring to entertain the noblest Affections of the human Mind. We should pursue these Reflections till we come to this, as our deliberate fixed Persuasion, that Religion duly known and practised hath a Tendency to promote

the true Happiness of our Nature ; that it is not inconsistent with any Pleasures which are not reasonable and innocent, and is a Source of the purest and most lasting Joys.

I am sensible indeed that, let Religion be supposed never so excellent and amiable in itself, it cannot make a Person happy, except there be a Suitableness to it in the Temper of his Mind. They who are under the Power of vicious Affections and Lusts, and whose moral Taste is corrupted and depraved, can take no Pleasure in the Ways of Religion, nor have a just Relish for its pure and refined Joys till the Dispositions of their Hearts be changed. But we must not imagine, that therefore it is to no Purpose to set before them the Reasonableness, the Beauty and Excellency of true Religion and Virtue. Still they are to be treated and applied to as reasonable thinking Beings, who have a Power, if they will exercise it, to turn their Thoughts and Views to the most excellent Objects. It cannot be denied, that attentive Consideration and Reflection, and the representing Things in a proper Light, may have a Tendency to remove Prejudices, to rectify and improve the moral Taste, and by Degrees to work upon the Heart and the Affections. And, particularly in the Case before us, the best Way we can take to give

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4 DISCOURSE I.

a right Bias to the Affections and Dispositions of the Soul is to endeavour to get our Minds enlightened to a just Discernment of the moral Differences of Things, the Evil and Deformity and the pernicious Consequences of Vice and Sin, and the great Worth, the Beauty and Excellency of religious Virtue and real Holiness, the glorious Rewards which shall attend it, and the Divine Joys it hath a Tendency to produce. By such Views frequently repeated it may be hoped that the Reason will be convinced, a right practical Judgment formed, and the Will and Affections drawn to make a proper Choice: For the Views of an amiable Object have an assimilating transforming Virtue, and Beauty frequently beheld tends to excite Love and engage the Heart.

This is the Method which Reason prescribes, and the Holy Scripture directs to, in order to bring us to a right Temper of Mind, to purify our Hearts and raise our Affections to the noblest Objects. But such is our present Weakness and Depravity, such the Power of our corrupt Appetites and Passions, and the manifold Temptations to which we are exposed, that we stand in Need of Divine Influences and Aids for accomplishing this great Work. And therefore

therefore it highly concerneth us to offer up our earnest Prayers to God through *Jesus Christ*, that he who hath the Hearts of all Men in his Hands, and can touch the most secret Springs of our Souls, would communicate to us the Aids of his Holy Spirit, that the great Truths and Duties of Religion may come with a Divine Light and Power on our Minds, and that our Hearts may be brought to a just spiritual Taste and Relish of those pure Pleasures which the right Knowledge and Practice of Religion is fitted to afford. The giving us new Hearts and new Spirits is represented as his Work. Remarkable to this Purpose is the Promise he makes to his People, *Ezek. xxxvi. 26. A new Heart will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony Heart out of your Flesh.* And he afterwards declares, *Ver. 37. that for this he would be inquired of to do it for them.* But this is not designed to preclude the Use of their own Endeavours. For he, who promises to give them new Hearts and new Spirits, elsewhere exhorts them to make to themselves new Hearts and new Spirits: *Cast away from you all your Transgressions, and make you a new Heart and a new Spirit. Ezek. xviii. 31.* This is designed to intimate to us that we must use all proper Means

6 DISCOURSE I.

on our Parts, and apply our utmost Efforts to rectify what is amiss in the Temper of our Minds, as ever we would hope for his gracious Assurances and Divine Communications. And certainly, as has been already hinted, one of the properest Means for this Purpose is the stirring up the Powers of our Souls to an attentive Consideration of those Things which have a Tendency to remove and overcome our Prejudices against Religion, and recommend it to our Affection and Esteem.

As an Introduction to what I intend pretty largely to insist upon in Prosecution of this important Subject, I have chosen these remarkable Words of the pious Psalmist: *Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the Desires of thine Heart.* He begins this Psalm with cautioning Men not to give Way to the Frettings of Envy and Discontent, because of the seeming Prosperity of the Wicked, who often flourish in an Abundance of Riches, Honours, and Pleasures of this present World, whilst good Men, *the excellent of the Earth*, are in a poor mean Condition, afflicted and despised. *Fret not thyself because of Evil-Doers, neither be envious against the Workers of Iniquity.* He observes that their Prosperity is a *vain Shew*, and at best very transitory in its Duration: *They*

DISCOURSE I. 7

They shall soon be cut down as the Grass, and wither as the green Herb. Men of real Piety and Virtue, who place their Trust in their God, and go on in a Course of Well-doing, may not have a large Affluence of this World's Goods, but they shall have what is necessary for their Support, and the Favour and Blessing of God with it, which sweetens every thing, and is a better Security for their Subsistence, than any worldly Wealth or Power can furnish: *Trust in the Lord, and do Good; so shalt thou dwell in the Land, and verily thou shalt be fed.* And then the Psalmist adds, *Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the Desires of thine Heart.* Whilst others seek for Pleasure in the Vanities of this transitory World, do thou place thy highest Happiness in God alone, make him the chief Object of thy Joy, and so shalt thou never be disappointed. He shall give thee what is really best for thee, and through his Grace and Goodness thou shalt attain to that true Happiness which is able to satisfy the most enlarged Desires and Capacities of thy Soul.

This Precept of *delighting in the Lord* is not to be understood in so strict a Sense, as if he were to be the only Object of our Joy, and we were not allowed to delight or take

Pleasure in any Thing else. It is evident to any one that considers the human Frame, that Man is capable of taking in a Variety of Joys, suited to the various Powers and Affections of his Nature ; Pleasures flow in upon us at our Eyes, our Ears, our Taste, and all the Senses ; and the Author of our Beings has stored the World about with a Variety of Things admirably fitted to excite in us the most agreeable Sensations. The Pleasures of the Imagination are still of a larger Extent, and of a more exquisite Kind. And superior to these are the Pleasures arising from the Pursuits and Acquisitions of Knowledge, and the Improvement of our rational intellectual Powers, and from the Exercise of the kind and social Affections, so natural to the human Heart, when it is not greatly perverted and depraved. Religion is not intended to deprive us of any of these Pleasures. On the contrary it tends in many Instances to heighten and improve them. It teaches us to consider them all in a Subordination to the Delight we should have in God the chief Good. This must be the supreme ruling Affection in our Souls, and all other Joys and Pleasures must be governed and regulated by it, and must be kept in their proper Place and Order, and this will give them their noblest Relish,

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The inferior Animals of the brutal Order are manifestly designed for no higher Enjoyments than those of the sensitive Life. When they attain to these, they attain to the true Happiness of their Nature, an Happiness adequate to the several Powers, Instincts, and Capacities with which they are endued. Religion and a Regard to the Deity does not enter into their Gratifications and Joys. They receive many Benefits from the bountiful Hand of Divine Providence, but without being sensible of their Obligations to the Sovereign Benefactor, to whom they owe their Existence, and from whom all their Blessings and Enjoyments flow. This is not to be charged upon them as a Fault: They have not Faculties capable of rising above the Objects of Sense to the Fountain of all Perfection and Excellence. But Man is a Creature of an higher Order, and designed for nobler Joys. He is capable of knowing and contemplating God himself, of loving, adoring, obeying and enjoying him, of thankfully acknowledging him as the glorious Author of all the Blessings he enjoys, and of raising his Affections and Views above them to him the supreme, the infinite Good. This therefore is justly required of him as his Duty. He is not to place his chief Felicity in any inferior
Good;

Good; the Desires of his Soul must be supremely fixed upon God, and in him must ultimately center and terminate. Then it is that he acteth up to the proper End of his Being, and in a Manner worthy of the excellent and sublime Faculties which God hath given him.

Man was at first created in an innocent and happy State, and this lower World was really prepared for his Entertainment. As it was then in its original Beauty, and was come fair and lovely out of the Creator's Hand, it could not but produce the most pleasing Sensations. And it was no Doubt agreeable to the Will of God, that Man should take Pleasure in that Variety of delightful Objects, which the Divine Goodness hath provided. Especially since *Paradise* was in a particular Manner assigned him for his blissful Seat, where he was placed amidst a Profusion of Joys. But certainly God never designed that he should take up with these Things as his proper Portion and Felicity, but that he should lift up his Soul above them to the supreme original Goodness and Beauty, and in him place his chief Delight and Happiness. And therefore, though he had an ample Liberty given him to entertain himself with the delicious Fruits of *Paradise*, yet it seemed fit
to

to the Divine Wisdom to lay a Restraint upon him with Respect to one, to make him sensible that he was under the Dominion of a higher Lord, on whom he had a constant Dependence, and to whom he owed his all; that he was not to seek or place his Happiness in an unlimited Indulgence to his own Inclinations and Appetites, but in an unreserved Obedience to God, and Conformity to his Will, and in a Sense of his Love and Favour, and that the Pleasure he took in other Things was to be all in Subordination to him the chief Good.

If Man had persisted in his Obedience and Innocence, he would have enjoyed all the Happiness for which his Nature was originally formed and designed. He would have rejoiced in God and in his glorious Perfections, and in him would have found an Object capable of filling and satisfying the vast Desires of his Soul. This would have both purified and heightened the Pleasure he took in inferior Objects and Enjoyments, and all the delectable Things in the Creatures around him would have been as so many Steps by which to ascend, in Love, Gratitude, and Admiration, to the supreme and absolutely perfect Being. But, seduced by the deceitful Insinuations of the Tempter, he broke from his regular Subordination to his

his Sovereign Lord and Benefactor, and, setting up his own Will and Appetites to be his Rule, and indulging too great a Love to inferior sensible Good, he fell from God and Happiness. And ever since have the Sons of Men been prone to seek for Happiness in the Goods of this present World, and in the Gratification of their own irregular Appetites and Passions, in a Preference to the Will and Law of God. And the main Design of all the Discoveries and Revelations he hath made to Mankind hath been to recover them to a right Sense and Pursuit of true Happiness, to draw off their Hearts and Affections from a too close Attachment to inferior Good, and from those mean and vicious Pleasures which are unworthy of the rational Nature, and to engage them to seek for Happiness in an Imitation of his most amiable moral Perfections, in Obedience to his Laws, and in the Enjoyment of his Love and Favour. This especially is the great End of the Gospel Revelation. For this Purpose God sent his Son into the World, the unspotted Image of his own Goodness and Purity, by whom he hath made the most attractive Discoveries and Displays of his own Glory and Loveliness, and the exceeding Riches of his Grace to allure and draw us to his Service,
and

and engage us to come to him for Happiness. And for our greater Encouragement he hath been graciously pleased to set before us a State of everlasting Felicity in the heavenly World, consisting in the immediate Vision and Fruition of himself, and in a complete Conformity to him. And it is his Will that by our *delighting ourselves in him* here on Earth we should endeavour to get our Minds prepared for the Joys of his beatific Presence.

This Duty of *delighting in God* is of a noble Extent, and comprehends a great Deal in it.

To *delight in God* is to delight ourselves in the Fulness of his infinite Perfection, and in all those glorious and amiable Attributes and Excellencies which render him the worthy Object of the highest Admiration and Esteem of reasonable Beings.

It is to delight in his Works of Creation and Providence, as exhibiting the Displays of his Glory; and in the admirable Methods of our Redemption and Salvation by *Jesus Christ*.

It is to delight in his holy and most excellent Laws, and in the Practice of the various Duties which he requireth of us, and which are really conducive to the true Perfection and Felicity of our Natures.

And,

And, finally, it is to rejoice in the Hope which he hath set before us, the Hope of that eternal Life which is the Gift of God in *Jesus Christ* our Lord, to all those that love and serve him with Sincerity.

Now it is evident that these Things take in the Whole of Religion and of a holy and virtuous Life. From this View of them it appears that all the Pleasures of Religion may be comprehended in *delighting in God*. This is the central Point to which they all tend, and in which they all unite. And I shall endeavour to shew that in each of these Respects, the Knowledge and Practice of Religion is a Source of true and solid Satisfaction and Joy to a well-disposed Mind; and that therefore there is no just Ground for the Prejudices many are apt to entertain against a Life of real Piety and Virtue.

The first Thing to be considered, and which most directly and properly cometh under the Notion of *delighting in God*, is that we should delight in the Fulness of his infinite Perfection, and in all those amiable and glorious Attributes and Excellencies which render him the worthy Object of the highest Love, Admiration, and Esteem of reasonable Beings.

That God is absolutely perfect is the Voice of Reason and Nature as well as Scripture.

ture. All other Beings owe their Existence, and whatever Powers or Excellencies they are possessed of, to an higher Cause, and therefore must be dependent and limited. But God deriveth not his Being or Perfections from any other, but hath the Source of his Perfection and Blessedness eternally and independently in himself, and therefore hath nothing to limit him from without or from within. To him alone belongs that adorable Character, *I am that I am*. Of all other Beings it must be said, that some have one Perfection and some another, and that they differ in their Degrees of Excellence; but God alone hath all Perfections in the highest possible Degree of Eminency, and in the most amiable and perfect Harmony. If therefore we are pleased and delighted with the scattered Rays of Goodness and Beauty which we behold in Creatures like ourselves, what a sublime Pleasure must it yield to contemplate the supreme, original unbounded Excellence, in whom there is a Fulness of Perfection never to be exhausted? and then to consider him as ready to communicate of his All-sufficiency to us to make us happy! Such is the Pleasure that Religion opens to us! To this glorious Object it teacheth us to raise our Views. Admiration, when fixed on an excellent Object,

ject, naturally elevateth and transporteth us, and is the most delightful of all our Passions. And it heighteneth this Delight, when it is an Object in which we ourselves have a particular Interest and Concern. And what is there so worthy of our Admiration, as the self-existent, the all-perfect *Jehovah*, who is from Everlasting to Everlasting infinitely happy in himself, and who of his free Grace and Goodness offers himself to us to be our eternal Felicity! Here all our Faculties are swallowed up in a devout Astonishment. Let other Things be never so great and glorious, still they are but finite. It is possible at length to come to an End of their Perfection, to find out all that is in them of Goodness and Excellence. But in God there is enough to entertain and satisfy the Soul to Eternity, new Beauties and Excellencies still rising to it's View, and furnishing it with perpetual Matter for Wonder, Love, and Joy. After we have raised our Conceptions to the highest, still there is infinitely more that we do not know. Though our Faculties shall be for ever enlarging, we shall never be able fully to comprehend his Glory. Here therefore we may safely indulge our Joys, and give full Scope to our noblest Affections.

But

DISCOURSE I. 17

But beside this general View of God, as the absolutely perfect Being, it may be useful more distinctly to consider some of the principal of the Divine Attributes and Perfections known to us, whereby it will appear what a proper Object he is not only of our profoundest Reverence, but of our highest Love, Admiration, and Delight,



*On the Delight a good Man has in the
Contemplation of God and his glorious
Perfections.*

DISCOURSE II.

P S A L M xxxvii. 4.

*Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give
thee the Desires of thine Heart.*

IF ever any Duty might be said to be it's
own Reward, it is that to which we
are here exhorted, *Delight thyself in the
Lord.* To command us to do so is to com-
mand us to consult our own truest Happi-
ness, and to direct us in the properest Way
of obtaining it.

In our former Discourse on this Subject we considered the Delight which ariseth to a good and religious Mind from the Belief and Contemplation of God as the absolutely perfect Being, who hath an unlimited Fulness of Perfection in himself: And it was shewn, that this general View of the Deity tendeth to fill the Heart of a good Man with a divine Joy. Let us now proceed to a more distinct Consideration of those Attributes and Excellencies which render him the worthy Object of the highest Love, Admiration, and Delight of reasonable Beings.

And one of the first Divine Attributes which obviously presenteth itself to the Mind is almighty Power. This vast and stupendous Fabric of the Universe, which he at first created, and which he continually sustaineth and upholdeth, is the glorious Monument of his Omnipotency: *For the invisible Things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the Things which are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.* Rom. i. 20. Hence that noble Address of the Prophet, *Jer. xxxii. 17. Behold, thou hast made the Heaven and the Earth by thy great Power and outstretched Arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.* What can be too hard
hard

hard for him who created the World? *Once hath God spoken* (saith the Psalmist) *twice have I heard this, that Power belongeth unto God.* Pf. lxii. 11. To him it belongeth originally, essentially, and independently. In the most excellent and powerful of created Beings there is still some Mixture of Weakness. There are some Things which transcend the utmost Exertion of their Force. But in God and in him alone it is truly and absolutely infinite, and which extends to whatsoever is the proper Object of Power, without any Bounds or Limits. If all the Power and Strength of Angels and Men were collected into one, what a mighty Power would this be! and yet as it is all derived from God, and dependent upon him; so, if set in Opposition to him, or compared with the Fulness of Power which is in him, it would deserve no other Name than that of Weakness and Impotency. And this almighty Power of God, as it naturally tendeth to strike the Mind with a religious Fear and Reverence, so it filleth the Heart of a good Man with ineffable Satisfaction and Joy. How delightful is it to consider unlimited Power ever employed for the most excellent Purposes in maintaining and preserving the good Order of the Universe, and

particularly in protecting and defending those that sincerely love him and put their Trust in him, and in promoting their real Happiness? *The Eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth, to shew himself strong in Behalf of those whose Heart is perfect (or upright) towards him.* 2 Chron. xvi. 9. The Righteous are often exposed to the Rage of great and powerful Adversaries, but in this they rejoice that their Help is in the Name of the omnipotent God who made Heaven and Earth. Hence the devout Psalmist cannot forbear exulting and testifying the Joy and Confidence of his Soul in the Power of God, even amidst the greatest Dangers: *The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the Strength of my Life, of whom shall I be afraid? Though an Host should incamp against me, my Heart shall not be afraid; though War should arise against me, in this will I be confident.* Ps. xxvii. 1, 3. We are told, that the Lord giveth Power unto the Feeble, and to them that have no Might he increaseth Strength. Isa. xl. 29. *Zion, i. e. the Church, shall rejoice, because the Lord God in the Midst of her is mighty.* Zeph. iii. 17. Hence that noble Exhortation, *Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting Strength,*

Strength. Isa. xxvi. 4. His Power exceedeth all that the most unbounded Imagination is capable of conceiving. He is able to do exceeding abundantly for us, above all that we ask or think, according to the Power that worketh in us: Therefore shall Glory be ascribed to him in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all Ages, World without End. Eph. iii. 20, 21.

Secondly, God is a Being, not only of almighty Power, but of infinite Wisdom. And indeed Power without Wisdom is a blind unguided Force, more proper to inspire Terror than Esteem. But with God is Wisdom and Strength, he hath Counsel and Understanding. Job. xii. 13. He is described in Scripture as *the only wise God*, as if none could be properly called wise but God only. *To be wise as an Angel of God*, is sometimes used as a proverbial Expression to signify an eminent Degree of Wisdom. But all this Wisdom is wholly derived from God, and, however great in itself, is so small and inconsiderable, compared with his, that he is said to *charge his Angels with Folly*. Job. iv. 18. Of him alone it can be said, that *his Understanding is infinite*. Pf. cxlvii. 5. He taketh in the whole Compass of Things, past, present, and to come, at one intire all-comprehending View, and

24 DISCOURSE II.

hath a most perfect Discernment of all their possible Connections and Relations, and therefore must needs know in every Circumstance what is best and fittest to be done. Justly therefore is he represented as *wonderful in Counsel, and excellent in Working*. If. xxviii. 29. Knowledge and Wisdom, especially where it is in the highest possible Degree, naturally commandeth our Admiration and Esteem; and, when we consider it as ordering all Things for the universal Good, and even for our Happiness, it must needs produce in us a divine Joy and Gladness of Heart. We are ignorant short-sighted Creatures, liable to Errors and Mistakes, and often at a Loss what Course to take amidst the Difficulties and Perplexities which surround us. What a Comfort therefore must it be to raise our Views to the most wise Governor of the World, and Disposer of all Events! Bad Men may lay their Designs with great Subtlety as well as Malice, but *there is no Wisdom nor Understanding, nor Counsel against the Lord*. Prov. xxi. 30. *He disappointeth the Devices of the Crafty, so that their Hands cannot perform their Enterprize. He taketh the Wise in their own Craftiness, and the Counsel of the Froward is carried headlong*. Job v. 12, 13. It is a ravishing Thought to
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a good Mind, that, even when Things have the most disastrous Aspect, still infinite Wisdom is at the Helm, and presideth over all Events, even those that seem to be most contingent; and that God knoweth how to cause Good to arise out of Evil, and Order out of Confusion, and to bring about his own excellent Designs by Methods far transcending all human Comprehension. Safely therefore, and with a divine Complacency, may *the Righteous cast their Cares and Burdens upon the Lord*, both with Regard to Concernments of a public and of a private Nature; and can look up to him to *direct their Paths*, even in the most perplexing Circumstances, from a Persuasion that he will order all Things for them in the wisest and fittest Manner.

Thirdly, It is the Goodness of God which especially tendeth to fill the Heart of a Man of true Piety and Virtue with a sincere and solid Joy. What can possibly be more delightful than to contemplate infinite Wisdom and almighty Power as in a perfect Conjunction with the most diffusive Goodness and Benignity! To behold the supreme Lord and Father of all ever promoting the Good of the Whole, and the Happiness of each Individual as far as is consistent with it, sending forth his beneficial Influences,

as.

as the Sun doth it's invigorating refreshing Rays, and a Fountain it's Streams; but not merely by a natural Necessity, but from a most wise, free, and generous Benevolence!

The glorious Angels, as they are endued with the most enlarged Capacities, do most abundantly partake of those Communications of the Divine Goodness, which fill those blissful Realms above with inexpressible Light and Joy. But God's Goodness is not confined to them. Every Part of the Universe which comes within our Notice exhibiteth the amiable Displays of the Divine Benignity: *The Lord is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all his Works.* Pf. cxlv. 9. He provideth even for the brute Creation, who are therefore beautifully represented by the Psalmist as *looking with waiting Eyes* towards him the common Parent of the Universe, and receiving their Food from his liberal Hand, Pf. civ. 27, 28, 29. But it is especially delightful to contemplate his Goodness as manifesting itself towards the Children of Men. He hath made us a noble Order of Beings, endued with noble Faculties, and capable of various Joys, sensitive, moral, and intellectual. He placed Man at his first Creation amidst the pure Delights of
Paradise,

Paradise, and gave him many Tokens of his Favour, while he continued in his State of Innocence. And though it may justly be supposed, that, in the present sinful State of Mankind, many Things are ordered for our Correction and Punishment, and as Tokens of the Divine Displeasure against us for our Sins; yet still there are numberless Blessings poured forth by his benign Providence upon the degenerate human Race, notwithstanding their manifold Offences and Provocations: *He giveth us Rain from Heaven and fruitful Seasons, and filleth our Hearts with Food and Gladness.* Acts xiv. 17. *The Earth is full of the Goodness of the Lord.* Pl. xxxiii. 5. It is replenished with a great Abundance of Things for the Use and Delight of Mankind. Out of it's Bosom are produced various Kinds of Herbage and Grain, Trees, Fruits, and Flowers of manifold Use and exquisite Beauty. It's Bowels are stored with hidden Treasures, and it's Surface is diversified in such a Manner, as to yield the most agreeable and entertaining Prospects. The Animals upon it in their several beautiful Forms, and wonderful Powers and Instincts, are not only furnished with whatever is necessary for their own sensitive Life, but are designed to minister in various
 Ways

Ways to our Necessities and to our Pleasure. The Mercies we daily receive from God, and the Provision that is made for the Sustainance and Accommodation of this present Life, should excite grateful Affections in our Hearts towards our sovereign Benefactor: But above all what Joy must it yield to take a View of the infinite Grace and Goodness of God in the marvellous Methods made Use of for recovering us from our ruinous and lapsed State to Holiness and Happiness? Nothing can possibly exhibit a more affecting Proof of the wonderful Love of God to Mankind than his sending his only begotten Son into the World, to instruct us by his heavenly Doctrine, to lead us by his most perfect and lovely Example, and by his Sufferings and Sacrifice *to obtain eternal Redemption for us*. How delightful, how transporting, is it to consider God as *a God in Christ reconciling the World unto himself*? To behold that most glorious Being, according to the amiable Representation that is made of him in the sacred Writings, inviting Sinners to forsake the Paths of Vice and Destruction, and to return to him their rightful Lord and supreme Good; offering to enter into a gracious Covenant with them through *Jesus Christ*, and to pardon all
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their Iniquities upon their sincere Repentance; urging and engaging them by all the Charms of Love, by a Regard to their own truest Interest, by every Consideration that is proper to work upon their Hopes and Fears, and thus, as far as is consistent with the Freedom of rational Beings, even *compelling* them to be happy! How pleasing to behold him as on a *Throne of Grace*, encouraging their Addresses, accepting their sincere though imperfect Services, *pitying them as a Father pitieth his Children*, and, when he seeth it necessary to correct and chasten them, doing it with great Tenderness, supporting and comforting them in their Tribulations, and causing *all Things to work together for their Good!* To consider him as sending his Angels to minister unto them, but especially as communicating his Holy Spirit to enlighten, sanctify, and comfort them, and to guide them safe through all the intricate Paths, the Snares and Difficulties of this Pilgrimage State! And, finally, which completeth all, to consider him as having prepared, for all those that sincerely believe and obey him, everlasting Glory and Felicity in the highest Heavens! To have enlarged
Views

Views of the Divine Goodness, as displaying and exercising itself in so many different Ways, and in such a Variety of beneficial Effects and Instances, must needs fill the Heart of a truly religious and good Man with a sublime Satisfaction and Joy, especially when he is inabled to make a particular Application of all this to his own Case; when, being conscious of his own Sincerity, and feeling his Heart powerfully drawn to the God of Love, he looks forward with a lively Faith to that blessed State, where he hopes to be perfectly happy in the Enjoyment of him to all Eternity. Then it is that he may with inexpressible Delight break forth into those noble Strains of Devotion: *Oh give Thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his Mercy endureth forever. Because thy Loving-kindness is better than Life, my Lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee, while I live; I will lift up my Hands in thy Name. Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee. How excellent is thy Loving-kindness, O God! therefore the Children of Men put their Trust under the Shadow of thy Wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the Fatness of thy House; and thou shalt make them*

them drink of the River of thy Pleasures. For with thee is the Fountain of Life, and in thy Light shall we see Light. In thy Presence is Fulness of Joy, and at thy right Hand there are Pleasures for evermore.

Fourthly, We should delight ourselves God as a Being of spotless Purity and Holiness, of impartial Righteousness and Equity. “*Rejoice in the Lord, O ye Righteous, and give Thanks at the Remembrance of his Holiness.* Ps. cxvii. 12. God is called in Scripture, by Way of Eminency, *the Holy One*, and is said to be *glorious in Holiness. Righteous is God in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works.* Ps. cxlv. 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. This is the Voice of Scripture, and is perfectly agreeable to the soundest Reason. As his Understanding is infinite, he must have a clear and perfect Discernment of whatsoever is just and pure, and virtuous and lovely; and can never possibly, through Error and Mistake, in any single Instance, put Wrong for Right, or Right for Wrong. And agreeable to the pure Light of his infinite Mind is the perfect Rectitude of his Will, whereby he is in-

variably

variably and eternally determined to will and to do that which his unerring Understanding sees to be just and good, to delight in Righteousness and Purity, in moral Beauty and Order, and to abhor whatsoever is contrary thereunto. That Observation of St. *James* carries its own Evidence with it: *God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any Man.* Jam. i. 13. He can have nothing to turn him aside from an inviolable Regard to the sacred Rules of Justice, Righteousness, and Equity; no false Judgment to mislead him, no private Interest to bias him, no irregular Appetites and Passions to corrupt or pervert him. It naturally gives us Pleasure to behold, even in an imperfect human Character, a steady Love and Practice of Righteousness and Virtue, and a generous Abhorrence of Vice and Wickedness, though mixed with Weakness and Defects: And shall we not then admire and adore the great Original of Righteousness and moral Excellency in whom it is to be found in the highest possible Degree of Perfection, from whom that of all other Beings is derived, and to whom as their glorious Exemplar they should be all conformed! We read in Scripture of *the Beauty of Holiness*. As Sin is the foulest Blemish
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and Deformity of a reasonable Nature, to Holiness and Righteousness is it's true Beauty and Glory, and perfect Righteousness is perfect Beauty in an intellectual and moral Sense. With what Admiration and Delight then should we raise our Views to the pure unblemished Glories of the supreme Being, whose unspolluted Essence can never admit the least Stain of moral Defilement: On this Account the blessed Angels celebrate and adore him, saying *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts!* II. vi. 3. and the Church joins in that noble Hymn of Praise: *Just and true are thy Ways, O thou King of Saints. Who shall not fear thee, and glorify thy Name? For thou only art holy.* Rev. xv. 3, 4. It cannot but yield the highest Satisfaction to a well-disposed Mind to be assured that infinite Righteousness governs the World, and presideth over the universal Administration of Things! to observe the Holiness and Righteousness of God shining forth in the Precepts of his Law, and admirably exemplified in the Life and Practice of his well-beloved Son *Jesus Christ* our Lord! And then to consider that infinitely holy and righteous Being as encouraging the imperfect Beginnings of Holiness and Virtue here on

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Earth,

Earth, and sending his Holy Spirit to assist our sincere Endeavours! *The righteous Lord loveth Righteousness, his Countenance doth behold the Upright.* Pf. xi. 7. The great End of his Dispensations towards us is that *we may be made Partakers of his Holiness* Heb. xii. 10. This therefore is that to which a good Man ardently aspires, to make a constant Progress in real Holiness of Heart and Life; and he looketh forward with Joy to the heavenly World, where he hopes to be free from all moral Defilement, and to be holy as God is holy, as far as the limited Capacity of his Nature will permit.

Fifthly, It is delightful to contemplate God as a Being of steady Faithfulness and Truth. This indeed may be justly regarded as a Branch of his Righteousness, but it well deserves to be distinctly considered, and is frequently celebrated in the sacred Writings. God is there said to be *abundant in Goodness and Truth.* Exod. xxxiv. 6. and is called by Way of Eminency *the God of Truth.* II. lxxv. 16. It is a melancholy Reflection, that there is so little Truth to be found among Mankind, so that we are sometimes ready to say in our Haste with the Psalmist, *All Men are Liars.* Pf. cxvi. 11. Their
Words,

DISCOURSE II. 35

Words, their Promises, their professed Friendships are little to be depended upon. But it is God's glorious Character, that *he cannot lie*. Tit. i. 2. It is as *impossible for him to lie*, as it is for him to *deny himself*. On him therefore we may safely rely, believing the Revelations he hath given us, trusting in his Word, and rejoicing in his Promises: *He will ever be mindful of his Covenant*. Justly therefore may we cry out with Joy and Transport: *For ever, O Lord, thy Word is settled in Heaven; thy Faithfulness is unto all Generations*. Ps. cxix. 89, 90. *O praise the Lord, all ye Nations; praise him, all ye People: For his merciful Kindness is great towards us; the Truth of the Lord endureth for ever. Praise ye the Lord*. Ps. cxvii.

This leads me to observe, That it mightily heighteneth the Pleasure which a good Man taketh in the divine Perfections to consider that this infinitely perfect and glorious Being is *from everlasting to everlasting the same*. All finite created Beings are liable to Change: The most perfect of them all may possibly, if left to themselves, *fall from their Excellency*, their Righteousness and Goodness, in a greater or lesser Degree. But God is

absolutely immutable in his Existence and in his Perfections, and can never possibly become less perfect, less powerful, wise, good, and righteous than he is: *With him is no Variableness, nor Shadow of Turning.* Jam. i. 17. *The Counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the Thoughts of his Heart unto all Generations.* Ps. xxxiii. 11. His most gracious Purposes of Love towards us are stable and sure: *His Gifts and Calling are without Repentance.* Rom. xi. 29. What a solid Foundation doth this lay for a noble Confidence in God, and in Consequence of this for a divine Joy! In him alone may the Mind, wearied with the Uncertainty and Instability of all earthly Things, safely and delightfully acquiesce, and enjoy a sure and everlasting Repose.

I add, that the Consideration of the Divine Omnipresence, which is so apt to strike the Wicked with Terror, is full of Consolation and Joy to good and upright Souls. How comforting is it to think that this unchangeably glorious and all-perfect *Jehovah*, this most wise, powerful, holy, and beneficent Being, *filleth Heaven and Earth*, and every Part of this vast Universe, *with his Presence!* *He is not far from every one of us, seeing it is in him*

DISCOURSE II. 37

him that we live, and move, and have our Being. Acts xvii. 27, 28. A good Man may be banished from his House, from his Friends, and from his Country; but he cannot be banished from his God. The Power and Malice of his greatest Enemies cannot deprive him, or intercept his gracious Communications. His Joy may be said to be ever near to him, since God is always near to him, who is the chief Object as well as Author of his Joy. What a pleasing Thought is it, that, wherever he is, be it in a Wilderness or in a Dungeon, his *heavenly Father*, and *almighty Friend*, is with him there, who seeth all his Difficulties and Distressès, and is able to grant him all needful Assistances and Supports, and will in the End cause *all Things to work for his real Benefit!* The Man who firmly believes this, and sincerely endeavours to approve himself to God in a Course of dutiful Obedience, may upon just Grounds *rejoice even in Tribulation*, saying, when Things have the most uncomfortable Aspect, *I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right Hand, I shall not be moved; therefore my Heart is glad, and my Glory rejoiceth, &c.* Pf. xvi. 8.

From the several Considerations which have been mentioned, it appears that a steady Faith in God, which lies at the Foundation of all Religion, and the Contemplation of his incomparable Perfections, is a Fund of inward Satisfaction and Joy to a religious Mind. And God's requiring us to *delight ourselves in him*, and proposing himself to us to be our chief Joy, is a manifest Proof of his great Goodness towards us, and of his earnest Desire of our Happiness. The immediate Vision and Fruition of the Deity shall be an everlasting Source of pure and refined Pleasures to Angels and Saints in the heavenly World, and, in Proportion to our acquainting ourselves with him in this present State, we shall feel a divine Joy springing up in our hearts, and shall have Heaven brought down to us in some happy Beginnings here on Earth. How delightful is it to fix the Eye of the Mind upon the supreme original Beauty and Excellence, and to lay ourselves open to it's infinite and sacred Charms, compared with which the most lovely Objects in the whole Creation are Vanity and Emptiness!

What Enemies are they therefore to their own Joy and Happiness, who seldom

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or never raise their Views to that most glorious and amiable Being! Strange that reasonable Creatures should have such a Disinclination to think of him, to whom they owe it that they are able to think at all, and in whom alone they can be happy! What a perverted Frame of Mind doth this argue! Many there are to whom that Character may be justly applied, which the Psalmist gives of the ungodly Man, that *God is not in all his Thoughts.* Pf. x. 4. *They live as without God in the World;* as little do they for the most Part think of him, as if there were no such Being: Or, if a Thought of God darteth into their Minds, it meets with no welcome Entertainment there: *They say unto God,* as *Job* represents them, *Depart from us, we desire not the Knowledge of thy Ways.* Job xxi. 14. Few there are indeed who would openly avow this in Words; but it is their real Language. And what is this but, as far as in them lies, to banish themselves from the Fountain of Joys! Justly doth the Psalmist brand that Man with the Character of a *Fool*, who *saitb in his Heart, There is no God,* or whose secret Wish it is that there were none; a Wish infinitely more monstrous, than to wish the Sun out of the Firmament!

It is in Effect to wish all Joy and Happiness out of the World, and that universal Darkness and Confusion should cover the Face of Things.

How different from this is the Temper and Character of the Man who *delighteth himself in God!* What are all the low and evanid Pleasures of the voluptuous Sensualist, or of those who go on in a perpetual Round of Diversions and Amusements, compared with the solid and noble Satisfaction which this Man feels in his own Breast! That we may be fitted for relishing this divine Joy, let us labour to get our Hearts cleansed from base Lusts, and from corrupt and sensual Affections. Let us endeavour frequently to realise an invisible Deity to our Minds in the Meditations of Faith, at the same Time humbly and earnestly applying to him, *the Father of Lights*, that he would be graciously pleased to *shine in* upon our Souls, and cause us to behold more of his Glory. The more we habituate ourselves this Way, the greater Satisfaction we shall find in it, and the more freely and delightfully will our Thoughts go forth towards that glorious Being, so as to be able to join in that rapturous Strain of the devout Psalmist: *I will sing unto the Lord*

as long as I live; I will sing Praise unto my God, while I have any Being. My Meditation of him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord. Pl. civ. 33, 34. Here it is observable, that he not only calls God *the Lord, Jehovah*, but he calls him *his God: I will sing Praise unto my God*. He claims a special Interest in him. And this is what raiseth the Joy of a Man of real Piety to the greatest Height. He doth not contemplate God and his Perfections, as we may admire a beautiful Object in which we have no Interest or Concern; but as it were appropriates him by a lively Faith, and can say, with humble Assurance, upon contemplating that glorious Being and his incomparable Perfections, *This is my God, my rightful Lord, my satisfying Portion, and chief Good: He is mine and I am his*. Oh transporting Thought! The Joy that ariseth from a Sense of this is what no Words can fully express, but many excellent Persons have had Experience of it in their own Breasts. This Joy, where it is of the right Kind, ennobles and purifies the Soul, and will produce correspondent Effects in the Temper and Practice. And indeed what we are to have principally in View, in our Meditations of the Deity, is not merely
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to furnish a speculative Entertainment to our Minds, but that we may be thereby formed into a divine and godlike Temper, and may have his amiable moral Excellencies copied out in our own Souls from that fair and glorious Original. When the Soul endeavoureth to lay itself open to his gracious Influences and Communications; when it is so captivated and inamoured with the View of the supreme Goodness, Righteousness, and Purity, that it receiveth it within itself, and is *transformed* into it's Nature and Likeness; it is then that it may most properly be said to *delight in God*. This it is to *have Communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* 1 Joh. iv. 16. This is true Religion, this is the Divine Life. The Soul hath then an inward Fund of Happiness, a Source of pure and refined Joys, as being united to the supreme Good, and taking in the lively and delightful Impressions of his most excellent Virtues, his Glory and Beauty: *Beholding as in a Glass the Glory of the Lord, as the Apostle speaks, we are changed into the same Image from Glory to Glory.* 2 Cor. iii. 18. Thus it is in some Measure here

DISCOURSE II. 43

on Earth, and shall be perfectly so in the heavenly State, that World of everlasting Light and Love, where *we shall see him as he is, and shall behold his Face in Righteousness, and be for ever satisfied with his Likeness.*



On Delighting in God's Works of Creation!

DISCOURSE III.

P S A L M cxi. 2.

*The Works of the Lord are great, sought
of all them that have Pleasure therein.*

IT is the great Advantage of Religion,
and which should mightily recommend
it to our Esteem and Choice, that what it
injoins upon us as our Duty is really condu-
cive to our highest Happiness. Of this Kind
is the Precept we have been considering,
which requireth us *to delight ourselves in
God.* This is a Duty of great Extent. It
includes

46 D I S C O U R S E III.

includes in the first Place our Delighting in the Fulness of his infinite Perfection; and in those incomparable Attributes and Excellencies which render him the worthy Object of the highest Love, Esteem, and Admiration of all reasonable Beings. Several of these Perfections and Attributes were distinctly considered, and it was shewn that the Contemplation and Belief of those glorious Perfections of the Deity, and a Sense of the special Interest which good Men have in them, must needs furnish a pure and noble Satisfaction and Joy to well-disposed Minds.

I now proceed to observe, that *our delighting in God* does also include our taking Pleasure in his wonderful Works, as exhibiting the Displays of his Glory. And indeed this is nearly connected with the former: For to delight in God's Works, in the Sense which we are now to consider it, is really to delight in his Perfections as shining forth in his marvellous Works. But it may be of use to treat of this Matter distinctly, and these Words of the Psalmist are very apposite to this Purpose: *The Works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have Pleasure therein.* It is here given as the Character of truly good and religious Persons, that they have Pleasure in
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DISCOURSE III. 47

the Works of God : They seek them out, they make them the chosen Subject of their Contemplations and diligent Researches, not merely to gratify a speculative Curiosity, but that they may be thereby led to love, to reverence, to admire and celebrate the glorious Author.

The Works of the Lord may for the greater Distinctness be distributed under three Heads, each of which, duly considered and improved, will minister just Ground of *delighting in him*; the Works of Creation, of Providence, and of Redemption.

First, We should delight in God's Works of Creation, *i. e.* we should delight in contemplating the Discoveries of Glory as shining forth in the Creation of the World, and the various Orders of Beings in it. *The Glory of the Lord, saith the Psalmist, shall endure for ever : The Lord shall rejoice in his Works.* He is represented as taking a Divine Satisfaction and Complacency in the Works which he hath made, the Contrivances of his own Wisdom, and the Production of his Power and Goodness; and, if we could take a comprehensive View of the great System of Nature, and behold all the Parts of it in their mutual Connections and Dependencies, in their various Relations to one another and to the Whole, what a ravishing.

48 DISCOURSE III.

wishing and astonishing Scene would open to us! It is at best but a little Portion we now know of the Works of God; and yet even the partial and imperfect Views which we have of these Things furnish a noble Entertainment to a pious Mind. How delightful is it to survey, as far as we are able the several Parts of the Creation, and then to ascend above them all to the supreme universal Cause, crying out with a devout Admiration, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory, and Honour, and Power; for thou hast created all Things, and for thy Pleasure they are, and were created.* Rev. iv. 11.

Let us look back in our Thoughts to that Point of the immense Duration when this material World was formed, and here let us represent to our Minds a vast universal Void, and then behold the grand and stupendous Fabric rising at the all-powerful Word of God out Non-existence into Being, and into the beautiful Order in which we now see it; the more we consider this, the more we shall be swallowed up in Astonishment: For, though it doth not imply a Contradiction to cause Things to exist which had no Existence before, yet this is what we can form no Idea of, who are only accustomed to behold Things made
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out of pre-existent Materials. And therefore we should, when we reflect on this, turn all our Thoughts into Reverence and Admiration of that incomprehensible Being, who only *spake, and it was done*, Pf. xxxiii. 9. *He commanded, and they were created*. Pf. cxlviii. 5.

The more to affect our Minds let us take a general View of the Greatness and vast Extent, of the Number and Variety, of the admirable Order and wise Contrivance of the Works of Creation.

First, Let us take a View of the Greatness and vast Extent of God's Works of Creation. To them may be justly applied those Words of the Psalmist, *The Works of the Lord are great*. Many of the Works of Nature, which are really the Works of God, even in this lower World, have a Grandeur in them which strikes us with Astonishment. Such are the lofty Mountains that seem to scale the Sky, those stupendous Heaps of Stone which in many Parts of the Earth rise and spread to an amazing Height and Bulk, and are stretched out in Length through many Regions; and yet how small and inconsiderable are these compared with the whole Earth, this huge and ponderous Globe, which contains such a prodigious Mass and Quantity of Matter! But, if we pursue our Inquiries

farther, and compare this terraqueous Globe with the other Parts of this wide-extended System, it may not unfitly be likened to a small round Ball hanging scarce discernible amidst the unmeasurable Spaces that surround it. To those Beings which are placed in very distant Parts of the Universe it appeareth at best no bigger than the Planets do to us; and probably there are many so far removed from our Earth, as not to be capable of discerning it at all; so that they cannot know by their own Observation, that there is such a Spot in the Creation. The fixed Stars that twinkle in our View, and which appear to us like so many minute glittering Spangles in the Firmament, are, by the Consent of the ablest Astronomers, Bodies of wonderful Bulk, much exceeding this earthly Globe in Magnitude. And how great the Number of them is none can tell: For the Stars that come within our View are but a Part, and perhaps a small Part, of those that are dispersed throughout the vast Expanse. Many of the heavenly Orbs, which cannot be discerned by the naked Eye, have in these latter Times been discovered by the Help of Telescopes; and there are probably many more which are removed at so immense a Distance, that no human Eye on Earth, though aided with

with all the Helps of Art, shall ever be able to get a Glimpse of them. Thus there are as it were innumerable Worlds, extending one beyond another; and, when we endeavour to turn our Thoughts this Way, we soon lose ourselves in the Immenfity of Space; which exceedeth the utmost Flight of human Imagination. And should not this general View of the Greatness and wide Extent of the Creation of God fill our Minds with a delightful Astonishment? It should naturally lead us to reason after this Manner: How immense, how incomprehensibly great, is that glorious Being, by whose *Word the Heavens were made, and all the Host of them by the Breath of his Mouth*; who is represented in the noble Language of the Prophet, as *meting out the Heavens with a Span, and whom Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens, cannot contain!*

Secondly, Let us consider not only the Greatness but the Number and Variety of the Works of God in the Creation. And, considered in this View, they must needs give Pleasure to a religious Mind. They are so many and various, that they are only to be fully known and comprehended by the great Author of Nature. If we take a Survey even of this Earth, which is that Part of the Creation we are best ac-

quainted with, we are astonished at the Multiplicity of Things which offer themselves to our Observation. No human Mind can pursue inanimate Matter through all it's various surprizing Transformations. It putteth on numberless different Appearances, and by it's manifold Combinations, and the Motions impressed upon it, is diversified beyond what the most active and enlarged Imagination is able to conceive. Who can undertake to enumerate the Fossils of various Kinds, Stones, Metals, Minerals, that are treasured up in the Bowels of the Earth; or the Vegetables which spring up out of it's Bosom in inconceivable Quantities, and adorn it's Surface; the Trees in their several Species from the lowly Shrub to the stateliest Oak or Cedar; the Herbs and Plants of such different Forms and Virtue; the several Sorts of Grass and Grain, and the Flowets so inexpressibly various, and exquisitely beautiful and pleasing!

If we next turn our Views to the animal Part of the Creation, the whole Earth seemeth to be replenished with living Creatures, and every Clod is swarming with Life; no Mortal is able to compute the Insects of various Tribes, many of them so minute, as not to be discerned by the naked Eye: And perhaps there are yet
more

more in Number which the finest Glasses have not been able to discover. And if from thence we proceed to the larger Kind of sensitive Beings, their Number and Variety is amazing; the Fishes which inhabit the watery Element; the Birds that wing the airy Region; the Beasts that walk and tread upon the Earth in all their different Forms, Powers, and Instincts; to all which may be added those of the human Species, the highest Order of Beings in this lower World, in their several Tongues, and Families, and Nations.

Such is the inconceivable Variety of Creatures upon this Earth, which is so small a Part of the Creation. What then must it appear to be, if we could carry our Views throughout the vast Universe! How many other Orders of sensitive and rational Beings there are in the several Regions of this wide extended System, we are at present unable to explore: But the Scriptures inform us of an *innumerable Company of Angels* who are represented as having their Dwellings in Heaven, and the Names by which they are described lead us to judge that they are of different Orders and Degrees; and there is Reason to believe that the least of them is much superior to Man.

Thirdly, Let us consider the admirable Order and Beauty, the Exactness and wise Contrivance of God's Works of Creation. Wide beyond Imagination as the Extent of this World is, Order and a most wise Disposition prevaileth throughout the whole. Thus it manifestly is in those Parts of the Universe which come under our own particular Notice; and we may be sure that it equally holdeth concerning all the rest. The more accurate Inquiry we make into the Works of God, the more we observe of Order and Exactness in them. Many of the Objections, which were urged by atheistical Philosophers of old against the Frame of the World, appear by later Discoveries to have proceeded from Ignorance or Mistake: And those Things which were censured as confused and irregular are found to be most wisely and fitly ordered. This whole vast Mass of Matter is subjected to steady Laws, wisely appointed by the Creator in the Beginning: And this is what is commonly called *the Course of Nature*, whereby there is an established Connection and mutual Dependence of Causes and Effects, proceeding according to stated Rules in a regular Order. If it were not for this, no Man could tell how

to act or what to expect; no regular Knowledge of Nature could be obtained; nor could any Use be made of Experience, since the same Things in the same Circumstances might produce one Effect this Day, and the next Day a quite contrary one.

The Scripture often taketh Notice of the regular stated Course and Order of Nature, established by the Wisdom and Power of the Creator. Hence we read *of the Ordinances of Heaven, and the Covenant of Day and Night. God causeth the Day-Spring to know his Place. Job xxxviii. 12. He appointed the Moon for Seasons, and the Sun knoweth his Going down. Ps. civ. 19.* The Stars, those huge and stupendous Orbs, may seem to a superficial Eye to be carelessly scattered through the wide Expanse, but they are really disposed with the most wise Contrivance, each of them placed in that Station, and in that Part of the Universe, which is fittest for them: *Lift up your Eyes on high, and behold who hath created these Things, that bringeth forth their Host by Number: He calleth them all by Names, by the Greatness of his Power, not one faileth. Is. xl. 26.* That particular Solar System, to which we more especially belong, is found according to the Observations of the most sagacious In-

quirers into Nature, to be wonderfully beautiful, and ordered with great Wisdom. The several Planets are very regularly disposed; their Courses are determined; their Bulk and the Quantity of Matter which is in them is exactly adjusted to their respective Motions and Distances from the Sun. And particularly this Earth of ours is placed in that Situation which is most proper for it: It's Bulk and Form is such as is excellently adapted to that Situation; and it could neither be much bigger nor smaller than it is; neither brought much nearer the Sun, nor removed at a further Distance from it, without great Inconvenience. God is represented in the beautiful Language of the Prophet, as having, when he made the World, *comprehended the Dust of the Earth in a Measure, and weighed the Mountains in Scales, and the Hills in a Balance.* Is. xl. 12. The Manner of Expression shews that in forming this earthly Globe he adjusted all the Parts of it in the most wise and exact Proportions. The same Thing is signified, when it is said that *he laid the Measures of the Earth, and stretched the Line upon it.* Job xxxvii. 5. A Metaphor drawn from skilful Architects, who, building an Edifice, proceed by Rule, and

and according to the juſteſt Proportions. To the ſame Purpoſe Divine Wiſdom is repreſented as *making a Weight for the Winds, and weighing the Waters by Meaſure; as having made a Decree for the Rain, and a Way for the Lightning of the Thunder.* Job xxviii. 25, 26.

Thus Order every-where ſhines forth in the inanimate Creation. But there are ſtill greater Evidences of Wiſdom and Deſign in the Formation of living Creatures; even thoſe of them which ſeem to be the meaneſt, the moſt inconfiderable, ſuch as the minuteſt Inſects, are ſo admirably formed, and in the nice and exact Adjustment of their little Parts and Members ſuch exquisite Skill is diſplayed, that they who have made the moſt diligent Reſearches into theſe Things have been at a Loſs how ſufficiently to expreſs their Admiration and Aſtoniſhment. As far as we are able diſtinctly to trace the different Species of Animals through their various Forms and Inſtincts, they are ſteadily directed to what is neceſſary for their Preſervation, their Food, and the Continuance of their Species, and are provided with Gratifications and Enjoyments ſuited to their ſeveral Natures. They have Organs excellently fitted for Motion and Sen-

58 DISCOURSE III.

Sensation, and peculiarly adapted to that particular Kind of Life for which they are designed. In all those Things we may observe such manifest Indications of orderly Contrivance, that we have Reason to cry out with the devout Psalmist, *O Lord, how manifold are thy Works! in Wisdom hast thou made them all.*

Who can undertake to describe the innumerably various Ranks in the Scale of Beings, rising in an orderly Progression, one above another, the highest of an inferior Species coming near to the lowest of an higher Order, so that there is no disagreeable Chasm in the Creation, but a beautiful Harmony is spread through the Whole? How delightful must it be to pursue them through all their various Degrees of Life and Capacities for Enjoyment, till we arrive to the great Fountain of Life, the glorious self-existent *Jehovah*, from whom they and all their Powers are derived!

But it is in the rational and moral Part of the Creation that the Glory of God is most illustriously displayed. The noblest of them, of which we have any Account, are the blessed Angels. And undoubtedly, if we had a clear and distinct View of their vast and sublime Capacities, their mighty
Power

Power and Activity, the Extent of their Understanding and Knowledge, and the Height of moral Excellency to which they are capable of attaining, it would raise in us the highest Conceptions of Wisdom Goodness, as well as Power, of the Creator; but we know little of them at present. The only Creature of the rational and moral Kind that we are well acquainted with is Man. And a considerate Survey of our own Nature could not fail to fill us with Wonder and Delight, How admirable is the Frame of the human Body! comprehending in so small a Compass a surprising Variety of Parts, many of them exquisitely minute and fine, all of them contrived with the most amazing Skill, and not one of them without it's proper Use. If we consider the Dignity of it's Form, the curious Structure of it's several Vessels and Organs so excellently adapted for all the Functions of the Animal Life, and with Regard to which, after the Inquiries of so many Ages, there are still new Discoveries made, and new Wonders opening to our View; should not this cause us to break forth into that rapturous Act of Devotion: *I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy Works, and that my Soul knoweth*

knoweth right well. Pf. cxxxix. 14. But above all it should fill us with a devout Admiration of the Deity to consider the nobler Part of our Nature, in which we more nearly resemble the pure intellectual Essence of the supreme Being. How excellent are the Faculties of the human Soul! The Understanding, whereby it is capable of knowing and contemplating not only sensible and material Objects, but Things spiritual and invisible, and the most perfect and glorious of all Beings, God himself; the Imagination, whereby it can form innumerable sprightly Images of Things which strike the Mind with great Force; the Memory, in which, as in an ample and faithful Repository, is treasured up a prodigious Variety of Ideas relating to numberless Subjects of various Kinds. But especially let us consider the moral Powers with which Man is endued; the Principle of Reason, which is designed to preside over and to govern the sensitive Appetites and Passions; the self-determining Power of the Will, which makes him Master of his own Actions, and accountable for them; the inward Sense he hath, when not depraved by corrupt Habits and Prejudices, of Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, of the Beauty and

DISCOURSE III. 61

and Excellency of Virtue and moral Goodness, and the Turpitude and Deformity of Vice and Sin; the Power he hath of reflecting upon himself and his own Actions, with the unspeakable Satisfaction which ariseth from a Consciousness of Well-doing, and the Horror and Remorse which he is subject to from a Sense of a contrary Conduct; the kind and social Affections implanted in the human Heart, which shew that Man was designed not merely to consult his own private Interest, but to promote the public Good and the Happiness of others as well as his own; and, finally, the Power he hath of looking forwards to Futurity, and carrying his Views beyond the utmost Limits of this present Life: All these Things demonstrate him to be a noble Creature, a moral Agent, originally formed and designed for high Degrees of Virtue and Happiness.

To all which may be added the admirable Laws of the vital Union between Soul and Body, whereby Substances of such different Natures are most closely and intimately joined. By virtue of this Union Man is rendered capable of taking in and relishing Beauties and Pleasures both of a material and sensible, and of an intellectual

tual Kind ; and there is a close Connection established between certain Motions and Impressions on the bodily Organs and certain Affections and Sensations in the Soul ; and all the Senses are adjusted 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 wonderful Compositions in all Nature, nearly allied to the spiritual and material World, and uniting both in himself.

Thus have we taken a brief and general Survey of the Works of Creation. And with Regard to them we may justly say that *the Works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have Pleasure therein.* One End for which such noble Faculties were given us was certainly this, that we should search into and contemplate God's wonderful Works. Nor must we imagine that none can do this but Persons of Learning and who have made a Progress in philosophical Studies. Common Reason and Attention, with such Helps as any Man may obtain who is heartily desirous to be informed, will lead us into such a Knowledge of these Things as is sufficient to fill our Souls with Wonder and Delight, and to
excite

DISCOURSE III. 63

excite and enlarge holy and devout Affections in our Hearts. There is none of us but must be sensible, that we might turn our Thoughts this Way more frequently than we do ; and a Mind duly disposed to this sacred Excercise would find many Opportunities for making delightful Excursions into the Works of God in the World about us, and admiring his glorious Perfections as manifested in them. One particular Design of setting a Part one Day in seven to the Purposes of Religion is declared to be this, that we should commemorate the Creation of the World. We do not therefore answer the Intention of that wise Institution, if we do not frequently contemplate *the invisible Things of God, which are clearly seen from the Creation of the World, being understood by the Things which are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.* This would have a manifest Tendency to form us to a devout and truly religions Temper of Mind, and to produce in us a pure and sublime Delight to which no fleshly Gratifications are worthy to be compared.

When we behold that glorious Body the Sun, and feel its chearing Influences and Beams, which diffuse Light and Warmth to numberless Beings : When we
view

64 DISCOURSE III.

view the ample Sky spread out as a fair and magnificent Canopy over our Heads, and observe the Balancings of the Clouds, with all their beautiful and grateful Variety of Shades and Colourings: When we hear the Winds blow, and the Thunder roar, and see the Rains descend with Water and refresh the Earth; and feel the Air breathing upon us its balmy and reviving Influence: When we observe the orderly Returns of the Seasons, the Beauties of the blooming Spring, the Summer and Autumn with their delicious Fruits and joyful Harvest, and even the Rigours of Winter, and the pleasing Varieties of a frosty Scene and a snowy Landscape, all useful and beautiful in their Season: When we survey the vast Ocean, that astonishing Collection of Waters in which there, are innumerable living Creatures, some of them huge in Bulk, and all of them peculiarly fitted for inhabiting the watery Element: When we behold the high aspiring Mountains, and lowly Vales, and wide-extended Plains; the verdant Fields, and winding Brooks and Rivers; the Woods and Groves, with their stately Trees and humble Shrubs and Plants; the Flowers in all their exquisite Beauties; with the several Kinds of Herbage and Grain, which

which furnish Food for Man and Beast : When we turn our Eyes to the numberless Animals that live and move around us, the Fowls of the Air and Beasts of the Field ; some of them remarkable for their Beauty ; others for their Strength ; some to be admired for their Swiftnefs, others for their Courage, or for their Sagacity and the Acuteness of their Senses ; and contributing in various Ways to the Convenience or Entertainment of human Life : When we farther consider that in the Night Seasons, whilst Darknefs seems to hide the Beauties of the Creation, and to spread a Vail over this lower World, a new and glorious Prospect openeth to us, than which nothing can be better fitted to strike the Mind with a pleasing Astonishment : When we behold the Moon shining in it's Brightness, the Firmament all glowing with innumerable Stars which sparkle in our Sight ; and which, in the Judgment of those who have most carefully examined these Things, are Bodies of amazing Magnitude as well as Splendor, removed at a vast Distance from our Earth and from one another. But, above all, when we attentively consider the wonderful Structure of our own Bodies, and the noble and excellent Faculties of

66 DISCOURSE III.

our Souls, by which we are so far raised above the brute Animals, and are made after the Divine Image, capable of a sublime and everlasting Felicity: Surely in all these Things a religious Mind may trace the illustrious Footsteps of the Deity, and find Matter of delightful Admiration! A good Man can never want Entertainment, when he hath the Works of God continually before his Eyes. He hath a far nobler Pleasure in them than other Men, for they not only gratify his Curiosity, but raise his Devotion. He ascendeth above these outward sensible Things to the great invisible Author, and whilst he contemplateth the Works of Nature in the World above him, he considereth himself as surrounded by the bright Beams of the Divinity, the glorious Evidences of infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness. He sees the great Name of God inscribed in legible Characters upon every Part of this vast universal Frame, and can say concerning all Things around him, *These are the Works of God.* The whole World is to him an august Temple of the Divinity, replenished with his Presence and Glory; a magnificent Palace, gloriously decorated and adorned by a Divine Hand. Others may amuse them-

DISCOURSE III. 67

themselves with the Beauties of the Creation, without looking farther; but he beholdeth, loveth, adoreth God in them. Thus did the pious Psalmist: An excellent Specimen of which, we have in the civth. Psalm, that admirable Hymn of Praise in which he stirreth up his Soul, and all his inward Powers, *to bless and praise the Lord* for his Works of Creation and Providence; and concludes with this Divine Resolution, *I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing Praises unto my God whilst I have any Being: My Meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.* Pf. civ. 33, 34. In like Manner; in the cxlviiiith Psalm, he calleth upon all the Orders of Creatures, from the highest to the meanest, to form one universal Concert for celebrating the Praises of the great Creator and Parent of the Universe. To the same Purpose in the ciii Psalm, after having addressed himself to the holy Angels, the noblest Order of created Beings, *to bless the Lord*, he adds, *Bless the Lord, all his Works, in all Places of his Dominion: Bless the Lord, O my Soul.* Pf. ciii. 20, 21, 22.

What happy Lives do those lead who thus take Occasion from the Objects which daily present themselves to their View,

to adore the great Former of all Things! who regard all the Creatures as the Monuments of his Praise, and, when they taste their Sweetness or admire their Beauty, are thereby led to the supreme original Goodness and Excellence! How mean and how low, compared with this, are the Pleasures of those who are absolutely immersed in sensual Enjoyments, or who spend their whole Time in trifling Diversions and Amusements, whilst they in a great Measure neglect the chief End of their Being! But let us act a nobler Part, as becometh reasonable Creatures and *Christians*. It is true Religion alone that teacheth us to make a right Use of the Creatures, to spiritualise material Objects, and to discern the Impressions of the Divine Glory upon them. What a just Foundation doth this lay for the noblest Joys, which tend not only to delight but to exalt and purify our Souls, and to prepare us for that State where we hope to see God, not merely in the Glass of the Creation, but to *behold him Face to Face*, and to join with an innumerable Company of Angels and glorified Saints in admiring, adoring, obeying, and enjoying him to all Eternity.

On Delighting in God's Works of Providence.

DISCOURSE IV.

P S A L M cxi. 2.

The Works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have Pleasure therein.

IN the foregoing Discourse it was shewn, that God's Works of Creation, duly considered and improved, have a Tendency both to fill the Heart with the most adoring Thoughts of his Divine Majesty, and with holy Affections and Dispositions towards him, and also to produce a pure and noble Pleasure, which will greatly contribute to the Satisfaction of a good Man's Life.

Let us now turn our Views to God's

Works of Providence. And here also a glorious Subject presents itself to our Minds, which openeth a large and ample Field in which we may delightfully expatiate. The Works of Providence are what the Psalmist seems here to have especially in View, and which it is the principal Design of this Psalm to celebrate. And these *Works of the Lord* may be justly said to be *great, sought out of all them that have Pleasure therein.* A good Man searcheth into them, not from a vain and presumptuous Curiosity, but with a pious and upright Intention to reverence and adore the most wise and righteous Lord and Governor of the World, and to strengthen his Faith and Confidence in him, which will naturally produce a divine Satisfaction and Delight.

The Works of Providence may be comprehended under two main Heads: God's Preservation of the World and his Government of it. And both furnish a most useful and delightful Subject for our Meditations.

First, The Providence of God is exercised in preserving and sustaining this World which he hath created, and all the Orders of Beings in it. Hence in that noble Address to God made in the Name of the *Jewish Church*, *Nehem.* ix. 6, after
having

DISCOURSE IV. 71

having said, *Thou, even thou, art Lord alone: Thou hast made Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens with all their Hosts; the Earth and all Things that are therein; the Seas and all that is therein; it is added, and thou preservest them all.* We must not imagine that, when the Creatures are once brought into Being, they are able to continue themselves in Existence, without any farther Care of the Almighty; No. They depend on the Hand which first formed them for their continual Conservation. *He upholdeth all Things by the Word of his Power, and it is by or in him that all Things consist.* It is by his constant wise and powerful Influence, acting on every Part of this vast universal System, that what we usually call *the Course of Nature* is maintained, and that all Things in the inanimate Creation still proceed according to a settled Rule and Order. To this it is owing, that the Sun, Moon, and Stars preserve their several Courses or Stations, from which they have not deviated through so long a Succession of Ages; that the several Vicissitudes of Seasons constantly return, so that *Seed-time and Harvest, and Cold and Heat, and Summer and Winter, and Day and Night do not cease.* Gen. viii. 22. and that *the Earth continueth to bring forth abundantly in*

an orderly Series such an amazing Variety of Productions. The Minerals are still generated and ripened in it's Bowels; and the Herbs, Trees, Flowers, and various Kinds of Grain, preserve their several Virtues, and their distinct Forms and Appearances. To this also it is owing, that the different Species of Animals are preserved, and continue to be furnished in all Ages with the same Organs and Appetites for exercising the various Functions of the sensitive Life. The same Observation holds with Regard to the higher Orders of rational intellectual Beings, none of them have an independent Existence. By the sustaining Influence of the Almighty the glorious Angels are maintained in their noble immortal Life, and in the Use and Exercise of their admirable and sublime Powers. And, as to the human Race, it is *in him that we live, and move, and have our Being*, as St. Paul observes, *Acts xvii. 26.* To his providential Care and Concourse it is to be ascribed, that the human Body still retaineth it's curious Form and all it's exquisite Organs; that the animal and vital Functions are carried on; and that the human Soul is upheld in it's noble Faculties, and inabled to put them forth to Action. Who can attentively consider this universal Dependence of the whole

DISCOURSE IV. 73

whole Creation upon God, and not be filled with the most adoring Thoughts of that incomprehensible *Jehovah*, whose everlasting Existence is the stable Support of the Existence of all other Beings whatsoever! And what Satisfaction must it yield to a truly good and religious Mind to reflect, that the Order of Nature is maintained by that infinitely wise and almighty Being who first formed and established it, and without which it would soon be dissolved and fall into Confusion.

Secondly, The Providence of God is to be considered as governing the World as well as preserving it: *The Lord hath established his Throne in the Heavens, and his Kingdom ruleth over all.* Ps. ciii. 19. This vast Universe is his Empire, the Extent of which transcendeth all human Imagination. How many different Orders of Beings there are which inhabit the several Parts of this vast stupendous Frame, we cannot tell. But, whatever they be, they are all of them, from the highest to the meanest, under the Government of God. If we could but carry our Views to the heavenly World, how would our Hearts be ravished with the Beauty and Harmony of the Divine Administrations, as exercised there towards the Angelic Orders, those pure and glorious
Spirits

Spirits which inhabit the boundless Realms of Light and Joy! and even the Devils themselves are under his sovereign Controul. By a Wisdom which exceedeth our Comprehension, he setteth Bounds to their Rage, and over-ruleth their most pernicious Counsels and Attempts to the further Manifestation of his Glory, and often ordereth it so, that, whilst they only think of gratifying their own Malice and evil Inclinations, they are really carrying on the Design of his Providence. But these are Things we know little of at present. There is enough, in that Part of the System which cometh within our own particular Notice, to fill us with admiring Thoughts of God's providential Government. Even the inanimate Creation, though incapable of being ruled by Laws in the strict Sense of the Word, yet may be said to be under his Government, and are applied by him to answer the wise Purposes of his Administration. Thus, in the noble Language of Scripture, *Hail and Rain, and stormy Vapour fulfil his Word.* Pl. cxlviii. 8. *The Lightnings say unto him, Here we are,* Job xxxviii. 35. *The Clouds are turned about by his Counsels, that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the Face of the Earth.* Job xxxvii. 12. Even when Things go

DISCOURSE IV. 75

on in their usual Way, and nothing happeneth but what is agreeable to the ordinary Powers and Properties of Things, God in his wise Providence so ordereth and governeth the Course of material Causes as to correspond with and fulfil the Intentions of his moral Administration towards Mankind. But sometimes it pleaseth him to interpose in a more extraordinary and miraculous Way, the more effectually to awaken in Men a Sense of his supreme Dominion, as he is the absolute Lord of Nature, who can over-rule the Course of Things in the material World, as seemeth fit to his infinite Wisdom, for excellent and valuable Purposes.

God's providential Government may be also considered as exercised towards the Animal Creation. As he hath furnished the several Sorts of Animals with their various Organs, Appetites, and sensitive Powers; so he governeth them in such a Manner as is suited to the Natures he hath given them, and to the Ends and Uses for which they are designed. The wonderful Instincts, which serve as a Guide to them in many Cases, are not properly owing to any Reason or Wisdom of their own, but to the superior Wisdom and Power of him who first formed them, and still exerciseth

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76 DISCOURSE IV.

a Superintendency over them. The Care of the Divine Providence towards the brutal Kinds is frequently represented in the sacred Writings.—Remarkable to this Purpose is that beautiful Passage of the Psalmist : *These all wait upon thee, that thou mayest give them their Meat in due Season. That thou givest them they gather ; thou openest thy Hand, they are filled with Good. Thou hidest thy Face, they are troubled ; thou takest away their Breath, they die and return to their Dust. Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the Face of the Earth.* Pl. civ. 27, 28, 29, 30. Agreeable to this is the Doctrine of our blessed Saviour. *Behold, saith he, the Fowls of the Air ; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into Barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.* Matt. vi. 26. And he assureth us, that *not one of them is forgotten before God.* Luke xii. 6. If we had a distinct View of all the various Kinds of living Creatures, and the Provision that is continually made for them, what a high Idea would it give us of the immense Power, Wisdom, and Eternity of the universal Lord, who so governeth the animal World, that all the Orders of sensitive Beings, even the lowest and meanest, have each of them their proper Exercises and Gratifi-

DISCOURSE IV. 77

Gratifications filled and accommodated to their several Natures and Capacities, and are also made to contribute to the Use and Service of those of an higher Rank in the Scale of Beings. And particularly it is evident that the several Species of Animals on this our Globe are kept in a Subordination and Subserviency to Man; and that God in his over-ruling Providence maketh use of them as Instruments for executing his Purposes, whether of Mercy or Judgment, towards the human Race. When we consider these Things, how should we call upon all the Creatures that live and move around us to bless the great Lord of the Universe! And, since the brute Animals are unable to do it of themselves, let us offer up a Tribute of Praise to God on their Account as well as on our own, and lend them our Voice and Songs; a noble Specimen of which we have in the rapturous Strains of the devout Psalmist in the cxlviiith Psalm, where he calleth upon *Beasts and all Cattle, creeping Things, and flying Fowl to praise the Lord.*

But this leadeth me to observe, that, if the Care and Government of Divine Providence extended to the inferior brute Animals, much more to the rational and nobler Part of the Creation. God's Government
of

78 DISCOURSE IV.

of moral Agents is the most admirable Part of the Divine Administrations, and in which his glorious Perfections are made most illustriously manifest. To govern Numbers *which no Man can number* of reasonable Beings, so very various in their Thoughts, Inclinations, and Counsels, each of whom have a Will of their own, and a Power of determining their own Actions; to inspect their very Hearts and Thoughts, as well as their outward Actions, and accordingly to dispense to them proper Retributions, and to order Events so as not to infringe that Liberty of chusing and acting which belongeth to them, as intelligent and accountable Beings; I say, thus to govern them must needs argue a Wisdom, as well as a Power, which exceedeth our Comprehension, and can only be found in the infinite Mind; and, as Man is the only Creature in this lower World that can properly be regarded as a moral Agent, God's providential Government towards the human Race is what it most nearly concerneth us to consider. And a constant Regard to this is what eminently distinguisheth the truly good and religious Man; it necessarily entereth into his Character, and is indeed the great Support and Comfort of his Life.

For, First, He holdeth it as a certain
Prin-

Principle, that, as God's Government over us is founded on the justest and most unquestionable Right, so it is always administered in the best Manner. For this the immutable Perfection of his Nature gives us the highest possible Security. As his Understanding and Wisdom is infinite, he must needs know in every possible Instance what is fittest to be done. As his Power is almighty, he must be always able to execute his most wise Purposes. As he is present to the whole Creation, he hath every Thing under his own Eye. As he is of perfect Righteousness and Equity, he can never be biassed to do a wrong Thing. And, as he is of boundless Goodness and Bignity, the End he hath in View, in his Government of reasonable Beings, is to promote their Happiness, in such a Way as is worthy of himself, and suited to their reasonable Natures, and consistent with their moral Agency. His Government is indeed in the strictest Sense independent, supreme, and absolute, and accountable to none. Nor is there any Thing in this, if rightly considered, which should be Matter of Terror and Discouragement to a good Mind. On the contrary, absolute Power and Sovereignty, when it is in Conjunction with the most perfect Wisdom, Righteousness, and

80 DISCOURSE IV.

and Goodness, is the most comfortable Thing in the World. The more absolute it is in this Case the better, and the greater is our Security. For this must needs raise him above all Possibility of being tempted to Evil, and he must needs be possessed of an infinite Generosity of Mind, which will carry him to do the greatest Good, this being the noblest Exercise of absolute Power and Dominion. A Persuasion of this naturally tends to fill the Heart of a good Man with a Divine Confidence and Joy.

Secondly, He firmly believes that all the Events which befall us, whether prosperous or adverse, are under the Direction and Superintendency of Divine Providence. This is the constant Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures. Hence God is introduced as declaring, *I form the Light, and create Darkeness: I make Peace, and create Evil: I the Lord do all these Things.* Is. xiv. 7. where by *Light* and *Peace* we are to understand Prosperity and Comfort, and by *Darkness* and *Evil* we are to understand Trouble and Adversity; and it is signified that both the one and the other are under his supreme Direction. This is especially true of all those Events in which the Public is concerned. The Revolutions of Kingdoms and States, to whatsoever Causes they are immediately

mediately owing, are disposed and over-ruled by his wise and sovereign Providence: *He changeth the Times and Seasons; he removeth Kings, and setteth up Kings.* Dan. ii. 21. *Promotion cometh neither from the East nor from the South; but God is the Judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another.* Ps. lxxv. 6, 7. *He leadeth Princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the Mighty. He increaseth the Nations, and destroyeth them; he enlargeth the Nations, and straiteneth them again.* Job xii. 19, 23. A truly religious Man regardeth these various Changes, not as the Effects of blind Chance, or as the Sports of *Fortune*, which is only another Word for Chance; but as all conducted with the most wise Design. And, though he is far from excluding second Causes and Instruments, he looketh above them to the supreme Lord and Governor of the World, and can with great Satisfaction consider him as presiding over those Events, and over-ruling them all to valuable Purposes. And not only doth God superintend Events of a public Nature, but those which relate to particular Persons. He ordereth Men's outward Condition and Circumstances in the World, as seemeth fit to his infinite Wisdom: *The Lord maketh Poor, and maketh Rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the Poor out of the*

VOL. III. G *Dust,*

82 DISCOURSE IV.

*Dust, and lifteth up the Beggar from the
bill.* 1 Sam. ii. 7, 8. Even those Things
which we commonly call Accidents, and
which appear to us to be casual and fortui-
tous do not happen to us without the Divine
Direction or Permission. What a comfort-
able Consideration is this, and what a stable
Foundation doth it lay for a peaceable Con-
fidence, and a calm Acquiescence in every
Condition and Circumstance of Life;
Whatsoever Success a pious Man meets with
in his lawful Endeavours, whatsoever good
Things he enjoys, he receives them with
Thankfulness as the Effects of the Divine
Goodness; and this greatly heighteneth
the Pleasure he finds in them. And, on
the other Hand, if he be exercised with
Troubles of various Kinds, he considers them
as wisely ordered or permitted by an over-
ruling Providence. And there cannot be a
more effectual Remedy than this against
those Cares and Anxieties, those Fears and
Sorrows, which imbitter human Life, and
destroy the Peace and Comfort of it.

From what hath been observed it
follows,

Thirdly, That it must needs be a noble
and pleasing Employment to a religious
Mind to endeavour to trace God's illustri-
ous Footsteps in his Providential Dispen-
sations, and to admire the Characters of the
Divine

DISCOURSE IV. 83

Divine Wisdom, Righteousness, and Goodness in them: *Whofo is wife, and will observe these Things*, saith the Psalmist, *even they shall understand the Loving-kindness of the Lord.* Pf. cvii. 43. How delightful is it, in reviewing God's present or past Dealings towards the Church and World, to consider the admirable Conduct and Beauty of Providence as appearing in many remarkable Instances! To observe how those Things, which at first had the most discouraging Aspect, have afterwards appeared to have been most wisely and kindly ordered! Good has been brought out of Evil, and Order out of Confusion; and even the Malice and Wickedness of Men, and their Devices and Attempts against God's faithful Servants and the Interests of Religion, have by a wonderful Agency been over-ruled to the Advantage of both. How often have great Events been brought about by the most inconsiderable and unlikely Means, and those Projects, which were formed with the deepest Contrivance, have by an unexpected Turn been surprisngly disappointed, and *the Wise taken in their own Craftiness!* It hath frequently happened, that the Wicked have been remarkably blasted in the Midst of their Prosperity; and on the other Hand oppressed Virtue hath been

84 DISCOURSE IV.

wonderfully supported and rendered more illustrious by its Trials, and hath come forth brighter out of the Furnace. A good Man, who carefully remarketh the Hand of God in the Events which befall Mankind, hath a Satisfaction in them that others are Strangers to, and often sees the masterly Strokes of Providence in Things which superficial Beholders pass over with a slight Regard. And, even in reviewing the Occurrences of his own Life, he observes many Things which lead him to acknowledge and adore the Divine Providence, both in the prosperous and afflictive Events which he has met with; and can trace a wise, a kind, and righteous Design in them.

I add, Fourthly, That, where he is not able to account for the Reasons of the Divine Dispensations, yet he is still persuaded that they are all ordered for worthy and excellent Ends, though he hath not at present a distinct Discernment of them. According to the fixed Constitution of Things, which is the Appointment of Divine Providence, Righteousness and Virtue ordinarily tends to the Satisfaction and Advantage of human Life; and a Dissoluteness of Manners subjects those who abandon themselves to it to many Evils, even in this present State. Yet it cannot be denied, that

DISCOURSE IV. 85

that it frequently happens that Vice and Wickedness makes a very flourishing Appearance: The vilest Men are exalted, and seem to be favoured with a continual Course of Prosperity and Success; whilst those that are *the Excellent of the Earth* are exposed to Persecution and Reproach, *deslitute, afflicted, tormented*. Many are the disorderly and dismal Scenes which the prosperous Fraud or Violence of the Ungodly, the Cries of the Injured and Oppressed, and the Sighs of the Miserable, present to our View. But, under all these melancholy Appearances, a truly religious Man comforteth himself with this, that all Things are under the Direction and Government of the absolutely perfect Being, who is carried by the unchangeable Rectitude of his Nature, and the Reason of his all-comprehending Mind, always to take those Measures which are best and fittest upon the Whole. He therefore attributes every seeming Irregularity in God's Providential Dispensations to our own Short-sightedness and the Narrowness of our Views, since at present we can only take in a small Part of his Ways, and do not behold them in their just Connection and Harmony; and he is persuaded that in the final Issue it will appear that all Things were ordered in the wisest and properest Manner.

86 DISCOURSE IV.

Amidst all the Confusions of this lower World, he placeth his Confidence in him who *silletteth the Noise of the Seas, the Noise of their Waves, and the Tumult of the People.* Pf. lxxv. 7. When Trouble and Perplexity seem to be on every Side, he can say, with the devout Psalmist, *In the Multitude of my Thoughts within me, thy Comforts delight my Soul.* Pf. xciv. 19. It is given as the Character of *the Man who feareth the Lord, and delighteth greatly in his Commandments, that he shall not be afraid of evil Tidings; his Heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.* Pf. cxii. 1, 7. Though he finds himself sometimes obliged to cry out, *O the Depth both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!* Rom. xi. 33. Yet still he is persuaded that *the Lord is righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all Works.* Pf. cxlv. 17. And that, even when *Clouds and Darknes are about him, yet Righteousness and Judgment, are the Habitation, or Establishment of his Throne.* Pf. xcvi. 2. And therefore he *resteth in the Lord, and waiteth patiently for him,* and, instead of arraigning the Divine Procedure, he is satisfied that all God's Providential Administrations, however they may appear at present, are ordered
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and conducted with admirable Wisdom, Righteousness, and Equity.

It is manifest from these several Considerations which have been offered, that religious Meditations on God's Works of Providence cannot but be a Fountain of Consolation and Joy to good Men. In what a noble Strain doth the Psalmist express himself, speaking of these Things in the xciiid Psalm, which is called *a Psalm or Song for the Sabbath-day! Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy Works; I will triumph in the Works of thine Hands. O Lord, how great are thy Works! and thy Thoughts are very deep. A brutish Man knoweth not, neither doth a Fool understand this. When the Wicked spring up as Grass, and when all the Workers of Iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever: But thou, Lord, art most High for evermore.* Ps. xcii. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. What a joyful Consideration is it, that the World is constantly under the Direction and Government of the same wise, good, and almighty Being which created it! *The Lord reigneth, let the Earth rejoice, let the Multitude of the Isles be glad thereof.* Ps. xcvi. 1. *Say among the Heathen, that the Lord reigneth; the World also shall be established, that it shall not be moved; he shall judge the People righteously.* Ps. xcvi. 10.

How unworthy therefore were they of the Name of Philosophers and wise Men, who denied Providence under Pretence of consulting the Tranquillity and Happiness of Mankind! Such were *Epicurus* and his Followers. If all Things were left to a blind Chance, without a supreme Director; or to what the Heathens called *Fortune*, a giddy capricious Thing, without Reason or any certain Rules of proceeding; what could be expected but wild Confusion and Disorder, endless Uncertainty, and lawless Anarchy! He that looketh upon Things in this View hath nothing certain to depend upon, and must live in a perpetual Fluctuation and Perplexity of Mind: Whereas to consider that all Things are under the Superintendency of an infinitely wise and benign presiding Mind lays the best Foundation for a solid Tranquillity and a noble Confidence. He that lives from Day to Day under the Influence of this Persuasion hath Joys which others are unacquainted with. And as, with Regard to the universal Administration of Things, he rejoiceth in the Belief that they are excellently ordered upon the Whole; so, with Regard to his own particular Case, he is satisfied that nothing befalls him but under God's wise and kind Direction, and that

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all Things shall be made to work together for his real Benefit. And, finally, he carrieth his Views beyond this present transitory Scene to a future State of Retributions. He considers that this Life is not the Whole of Man's Existence, but is only the first Part of it ; that it is designed to be a State of Trial and Discipline, and not of final Recompence ; and therefore it is not to be wondered at, if there be several Things in the present Dispensations of Providence which we find it hard to account for. And therefore he looks forward with unspeakable Satisfaction to that great Day, when all the amazing Difficulties, the seeming Irregularities and Inconsistencies, in the present Methods of the Divine Dispensations, shall be fully cleared, and the admirable Scheme of Providence shall be placed in a fair and beautiful Light, and God's most wise Designs towards Mankind brought to their everlasting glorious Issues.



*On Delighting in the gracious Methods of
our Redemption by Jesus Christ.*

DISCOURSE V.

R O M A N S V. II.

*—We joy in God through our Lord Jesus
Christ.—*

TO consider the Works of God, as exhibiting the Displays of his Glory and Perfection, is not only a very useful but a delightful Employment. This hath been already shewn with Regard to the Works of Creation and Providence, the Contemplation of which yields a pure and noble Delight to a rational and well-disposed Mind. Let us now take a View of the wonderful Work of our Redemption and Salvation by *Jesus Christ*, in which the Glory of God is
illustriously

illustriously manifested, and which, if duly considered, hath a Tendency to fill the Heart with holy Admiration, Love, and Joy. This is what the Apostle here signifies, when he saith, *We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the Atonement.* And elsewhere he gives it, as the Character of real *Christians*, that they worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus. *Phil. iii. 3.* And St. Peter, writing to those who made an open Profession of their Faith in *Jesus Christ* in the Face of many Difficulties and Dangers, expresseth himself thus: *Whom having not seen ye love, and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet, believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of Glory.* 1 Pet. i. 8. Good Men under the Old Testament rejoiced in the Prospect they had of the Saviour which was to come. Thus did that great Patriarch *Abraham*, concerning whom our Lord declares to the *Jews*, *Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see my Day; and he saw it, and was glad.* John viii. 56. But we, who live after *Christ's* actual *Manifestation in the Flesh*, have in this Respect a vast Advantage above those that lived under any former Dispensation. The original Word *εὐαγγέλιον*, which we render *Gospel*, properly signifieth *good Tidings*; and it is fitly so called,

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as it bringeth the best, the happiest Tidings that were ever published to the World: *These Things write we unto you, saith the Apostle John, that your Joy may be full.* 1 John i. 4. Hither therefore let us turn our Meditations for a While, and see what there is in *Jesus Christ*, and in the admirable Methods of our Redemption through him, which may lay a just Foundation for the spiritual Joy, and tend to heighten the Pleasures of a religious Life.

The amiable and glorious Character, under which *Christ* is generally represented in the New Testament, is that of *the Saviour, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. And justly is he so called, inasmuch as, according to the Representation made to us in the Gospel, it is through him that the most inestimable Benefits are communicated to Sinners of the human Race; through him they are pardoned, justified, and saved: And he is expressly said to be *the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that obey him.* Heb. v. 9. He is also described to us under the Character of *the Mediator*. We are expressly assured, that, *as there is one God, so there is one Mediator between God and Man*, and that *Jesus Christ* is he. 1 Tim. ii. 5. And he is elsewhere called *the Mediator of the New Covenant.*
Heb.

Heb. xii. 24. What is included in the Idea of *the Mediator* is only to be known by the Light which the Scripture affordeth us, this being a Doctrine of pure Revelation. And, according to the Account there given us, it is by Means of the Mediator that the holy Majesty of Heaven seeth fit to carry on the Designs of his Mercy towards sinful Creatures of the human Race, for *reconciling them to himself*, and recovering them from the Miseries and Ruins they had brought upon themselves by their Apostacy and Disobedience; so that in this View the Character of the *Saviour*, and of *the Mediator between God and Man*, comes in Effect to the same Thing. This Constitution of the Mediator is not to be understood, as if God was not, of himself, mercifully disposed towards us, or willing to be reconciled to his offending Creatures. On the Contrary, it was, because he had the kindest Intentions towards us, and was determined to shew us Favour in a Way worthy of himself, that he hath appointed a Mediator, through whom he would deal with us upon the Terms of a gracious Covenant, and communicate to us the Blessings of his Grace. It is an Expedient devised by his infinite Wisdom and Love for transacting with his guilty Creatures, and dispensing his Favour
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DISCOURSE V. 95

and Benefits to them in such a Way as is most for his own Glory, and for their Advantage and Comfort. By this Method God hath provided for maintaining and securing the Honour of his sovereign Majesty, and the Dignity and Authority of his Government and Laws. This Constitution tendeth to impress upon our Minds a just and awful Sense of his glorious Greatness and spotless Purity, and a most humbling Conviction of our own Guilt and Unworthiness, in that he would not receive such sinful Creatures to his Grace and Favour, but through the Intervention of a Mediator of the highest Worth and Dignity, and in Consideration of his most perfect meritorious Obedience and Sufferings on our Behalf. And, on the other Hand, by this Method God hath almost effectually provided for the Benefit and Comfort of the Sinners themselves, and for dispelling their guilty Jealousies and Fears. It is no easy Matter to assure the Hearts of Creatures, that have a just Sense of the great Evil and Malignity of Sin, and are conscious of manifold Transgressions of the Divine Law, that a God of unchangeable Righteousness and Purity, the wise and holy Governor of the World, will not only pardon all their Iniquities, though they have been attended with heinous Aggravations;

96 DISCOURSE V.

gravations; but will receive them to his special Grace and Favour, and reward even their imperfect Obedience, mixed with many Failures and Defects, with eternal Glory and Felicity.—But, when it is considered that for this Purpose God hath himself been pleased to send his own Son into the World, and hath appointed him *to make Atonement for our Sins*, and to fulfil the Office of a Mediator for us, this hath a happy Tendency to remove our Doubts, and to inspire an ingenuous Hope and Confidence, and giveth us the highest possible Assurance of his wonderful Love and Grace towards us.

But, that we may the better judge of the Wisdom and Propriety of this Constitution, it will be proper to consider the Representation the Scripture makes to us of the State of the human Race, and on the Account of which they stood in great Need of a Mediator and Saviour. It is there declared, that *all had sinned and come short of the Glory of God*. They were all chargeable with manifold Transgressions of his holy and righteous Law, so that, *if God should enter into Judgment with them, no Flesh could be justified in his Sight*. *The whole World was become guilty before God, ὑπόδικος τῷ Θεῷ*, obnoxious to the Judgment of God, and to the

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the Sentence of his violated Law. *Rom. iii. 19, 20, 23.* They were all in a State of *Condemnation*, and *under the Curse*. Their State is fitly represented by our Lord in one Word: They were *lost*. *Matt. xviii. 11. Luke xix. 10.* *lost* to the principal noble End of their Being, and to the Happiness and Perfection for which they were originally designed. And *St. Paul* signifieth the same Thing by that emphatical Expression, that they were all *dead*: *If one died for all, saith he, then were all dead. 2 Cor. v. 14.* And he elsewhere observes, that *they were without Strength*, *Rom. v. 6.* utterly unable to save or deliver themselves out of that wretched and sinful State into which they had fallen. Thus Man, the chief Inhabitant of this Part of the System, instead of shewing forth the Praises and Virtues of his Creator, had dishonoured and disobeyed him: So that a Cloud seemed to be cast over the Glory of God's moral Government and Excellencies here below. *The Work of our Redemption* is to be understood of the Method fixed upon by the Divine Wisdom and Goodness for recovering Men from their sinful perishing State to Holiness and Happiness, and raising them to eternal Glory and Felicity.

This most wise and benevolent Design the Scripture nobly represents as having

been originally formed in *the Divine Counsels before the Foundation of the World*. He to whose omniscient Eye all Things are present from the Beginning, and who perfectly foresaw the corrupt and miserable State into which Mankind would fall by their Sins and Disobedience, did in the Counsels of his eternal Wisdom and Grace lay the glorious Plan of our Redemption and Salvation, and appointed his own Son, the Object of his infinite Delight, for undertaking and accomplishing it. This is signified by *St. Peter*, when, speaking of our being redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without Blemish and without Spot, he saith, that *he verily was fore-ordained, i. e. fore-appointed to this great Work, before the Foundation of the World.* 1 Pet. i. 20, 21. And *St. Paul* observes, that *God hath chosen us in Christ, before the Foundation of the World.* Eph. i. 4. And that *he hath saved us and called us with an holy Calling, according to his own Purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the World began.* 2 Tim. i. 9.

Accordingly this seems to have been the great Thing which the Divine Wisdom had all along in View. And though the glorious Person, who was designed in God's everlasting Counsels to the Work of Saving and Redeeming

Redeeming Mankind, did not actually take upon him human Flesh, till *the Fulness of the Time was come* appointed for that Purpose; yet it is reasonable to believe, that the most benevolent *Lord and Father of all* had a Regard to *Christ's* future Undertaking, and to what he was to do and suffer in Pursuance of it, in his gracious Dealings towards Mankind from the Beginning. No sooner had our unhappy first Parents by their Transgression and Disobedience brought Sin and Death into the World, but it pleased God in his great Goodness to give them Intimations of his Grace and Mercy, and of *the great Redeemer that was to come*. And from that Time the gracious Covenant, of which he was the Mediator, was virtually in Force; and good Men were pardoned and accepted according to the merciful Terms of it. Afterwards, in the successive Ages of the Church, the Saviour, who had been promised from the Beginning, was variously prefigured and foretold *at sundry Times and in divers Manners*. He was described by many remarkable Characters, that, when he actually came, he might be more easily and certainly known and distinguished. The Nation, yea the Tribe and Family from which he was to spring *according to the Flesh*, the Town where he was to be born,

and the Time of his appearing to the World, were distinctly marked out by the antient Prophets, *those holy Men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* They testified before-hand the salutary End and Design of his Coming, and the important Offices he was to sustain; they spoke of his Dignity and Glory in the most exalted Terms, and yet represented him as descending to the lowest Depths of Humiliation and Suffering. He was foretold and pointed out to the Faith and Hope of *the People of God*, under the Character of a *great Prophet and heavenly Teacher*, to whom they were to hearken; under that of a *Priest*, who should make his Soul an Offering for Sin, and who should make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and should make Intercession for the Transgressors; and of a *glorious King* invested with a Divine Authority and universal Dominion. Finally, It was signified that his Coming should be Matter of *great Joy*; that he should be a Blessing to Mankind, a *Light to lighten the Gentiles. and the Salvation of God unto the Ends of the Earth.* Thus it pleased God in his great Wisdom to prepare the Way for the Redeemer's Coming by a Series of illustrious Prophecies, which had been delivered through a long Succession of Ages, and at a great Distance of
Time

Time from one another. The Writings, in which these Predictions are contained, were undeniably published several Ages before *Christ's* Appearing and Taking upon him human Flesh. And it is a noble Contemplation, and which cannot but fill the Heart of a sincere *Christian* with Admiration and Joy, to observe how wonderfully they were fulfilled and accomplished. In him, and in no other, the several Characters by which the Saviour that was to come had been described, some of which seemed at first View to be inconsistent with others, concurred with a surprising Harmony; which yielded him a peculiar Kind of Attestation, that was never equalled in any other Case. At the Time which had been pointed out in the antient Prophecies, and which was in itself the fittest, he made his actual Appearance in the World. It has been thought strange, that the Saviour, whose Coming was of such vast Importance to Mankind, was not manifested many Ages sooner; and this has been urged as a mighty Objection. But, if the Matter be rightly considered, it will be found that no Age was more proper for his Appearing than that in which he actually came. If he had appeared in the earlier Ages of the World, besides that he would have wanted the Attestation arising from the remarkable

Series of Prophecies which I have mentioned, it would have been pretended that he came in the fabulous and barbarous Ages, when the Nations were rude and illiterate, and had not been as yet cultivated by Learning and Philosophy, and might therefore have been easily imposed upon: Nor could any Strefs be laid upon Facts of so extraordinary a Nature, said to have been done in the Obscurity of those distant Ages. But now there is no just Ground for such Objections: The Time when our Saviour appeared was not an illiterate and barbarous Age, but of great Knowledge and Refinement; the liberal Arts and Sciences had made a mighty Progress among the Nations; Philosophy had been tried in all it's Forms; and the Arts of Reasoning encouraged and cultivated to a great Degree; and at the same Time the State of the World was such as rendered the Coming of the great promised Redeemer particularly needful and seasonable.

The *Gentiles* were universally fallen from the right Knowledge and Worship of the true God, and adored a Multiplicity of Idol-deities: *They changed the Glory of the incorruptible God into an Image made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds, and four-footed Beasts, and creeping Things; and worshipped*

*ship*ped and served the Creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Rom. i. 23, 25. What passed for Religion among them, and which was established by their Laws, and interwoven into all their Systems of Policy, was an absurd Polytheism and Idolatry. And even their wise Men and Philosophers, instead of reclaiming them from their idolatrous Superstition, countenanced it by their Maxims, and fell in with it in their Practice. They were at the same Time sunk into the most monstrous Depravity and Corruption of Manners; of which St. Paul gives a most striking Description, Rom. i. 26—32. And, as to the Jews, the only People among whom the Knowledge and Worship of the true God free from Idolatry were preserved, some of them, as the Sadducees, denied a future State; others, as the Pharisees, the most applauded Sect among them, turned Religion into a mere outward Form and Shew, to the Neglect of real substantial Piety and Virtue; and by their corrupt Glosses perverted the true Design of the moral Law, and made it of no Effect by their Traditions. They had also, for the most Part, lost and perverted the true Sense and Meaning of the antient Prophecies relating to that great Saviour whom they professed to expect. Instead of spiri-

tual Blessings, and a spiritual Salvation, they had their Hearts wholly fixed upon worldly Enjoyments and Advantages, which they trusted he would procure for them in the highest Degree; and that he would bring all other Nations into Subjection to them. And it appears from their own Historian *Josepbus*, that the People in general were become exceedingly corrupt in their Practice. It might therefore be said, as *St. John* represents it, that *the whole World lay in Wickedness*. 1 John v 19. The true Sense of Religion seemed to be in Effect lost among Men: And the State of Things was continually growing worse and worse, nor was there any Prospect of recovering from it without an extraordinary Interposition of Heaven.

At this Time and in these Circumstances it was, that the wonderful Person, who had been so long promised and foretold, made his actual Appearance in the World. And the Design of his Coming is thus represented by himself, and by those that published the Gospel in his Name, and under the Direction of his Spirit: That *he was the Light of the World, and came to give Light to them that sat in Darkness, and in the Shadow of Death; and hath brought Life and Immortality to Light: That he came to seek and to save*

DISCOURSE V. 105

save that which was lost: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have everlasting Life: That he was sent to bless us in turning us away from our Iniquities, and to proclaim Deliverance to the Captives; that, being freed from their miserable Bondage to Sin and Satan, they might be made Partakers of the glorious Liberty of the Children of God: That he came to give his Life a Ransom for many, and to shed his Blood for the Remission of Sins, and to bring us out of a State of Condemnation and Wrath into a State of Peace and Reconciliation with God: Finally, For this Purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the Works of the Devil, and be the Author of a glorious Resurrection and eternal Salvation to all them that obey him.

This is a general Account of the salutary Design of *Christ's* Coming into the World; which must therefore fill the Heart of a good Man with a sincere and solid Joy. Justly did the Angel declare, when he published the Redeemer's Birth, *Behold, I bring you good Tidings of great Joy, which shall be to all People; for unto you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord; and with the Angel there was a Multitude of the heavenly Host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, on Earth Peace, Good-*
will

will towards Men. Luke ii. 10, 11, 13, 14. Surely then it becomes us of the human Race *to rejoice*, who are more nearly concerned; and this is what I propose distinctly to shew in the farther Prosecution of this Subject.



*On Delighting in the gracious Methods of
our Redemption by Jesus Christ.*

DISCOURSE VI.

R O M A N S V. II.

*We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
by whom we have received the Atonement.*

THE Redemption of Mankind by *Jesus Christ* is a glorious Subject for our Thoughts, and exhibiteth such marvellous Displays of the Divine Wisdom, Grace, and Love, as tend to excite in the believing Soul the highest Emotions of Joy and Admiration. It was observed in the preceding Discourse, that, according to the Representation made to us in Scripture, the wise and benevolent Scheme
was

was laid in God's *everlasting Counsel*, before the *Foundation of the World*, and the glorious Person fixed upon who was to accomplish it: That he was promised from the Beginning, and was all along variously prefigured and foretold in the successive Ages of the Church, till the *Fulness of the Time* came which was appointed by the Divine Wisdom for his actual Appearance among Men; and that, at the Time of his Coming, the State of the World, both with Regard to *Jews* and *Gentiles*, was remarkably such as shewed the great Need they stood in of a Saviour.

Let us now proceed more distinctly to consider the several Steps that were taken, in order to the carrying on and accomplishing the great Work of our Redemption and Salvation.

And here the first Thing to be considered is *Christ's* wonderful Incarnation, or *Taking upon him human Flesh*. He who was *the only begotten Son of God*, the Son of God not merely in that Sense in which Angels and Men are sometimes so called, but in a most peculiar and transcendent Sense, in which, as the sacred Writer to the *Hebrews* observes, that Character could not be attributed to the highest
Angels.

DISCOURSE VI. 109

Angels. *Heb. i. 4, 5.* that Divine *Logos* or *Word*, which was in the Beginning with God, and was God, by whom all Things were made, and without whom was not any Thing made that was made: He it was that at the appointed Time was made *Flesh*, and dwelt among us. *Joh. i. 1, 3, 14.* He was made *Flesh*, not by a real Conversion or Transmutation of his Divine Nature into human *Flesh*, which it were very absurd to suppose; but by an Assumption of the human Nature into a near Union with his Divine, which is very wonderful indeed, but can never be proved to be impossible or to imply a Contradiction. The Words *Flesh* and *Man* are often used in Scripture as equivalent Terms: And the Manner of Expression seems here designed to signify, that *Christ* became truly and properly *Man*; that he assumed the human Nature in Reality, and not in Appearance only; and that he took it in it's present frail and mortal State, with the Weaknesses and Infirmities to which it is now subject, though without *Sin*: Forasmuch as the Children are Partakers of *Flesh* and *Blood*, he himself likewise took Part of the same. *Heb. ii. 14.* And in Consequence of this he dwelt or tabernacled among us. He lived and conversed several

110 DISCOURSE VI.

veral Years together here on Earth, not in the Pomp and Splendor of worldly Glory and Magnificence, but in a mean and low Condition: *He took upon him the Form of a Servant*, as St. Paul expreffeth it; though at the fame Time on many Occasions the Rays of a Divine Majesty fhone forth through *the Vail of his Flefh*; fo that they, who attentively observed him, *beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth.* Joh. i. 14. This Incarnation of the Son of God, taken in all it's Circumftances, was the moft extraordinary Event that ever the World faw, the moft amazing in itfelf, and the moft beneficial in its Confequences. The more we confider it, the greater Matter we fhall find for delightful Astonifhment. In this Conftitution, the Wifdom of God, as well as his Goodnefs and Love to Mankind, is eminently confpicuous: For by this it appeareth, that the great appointed Saviour is every Way qualified for accomplifhing the important Work upon which he was fent, admirably fitted to fustain the Office and Character of Mediator between the offended Majesty of Heaven and guilty Creatures of the human Race. On the one Hand, he is a
 Person

DISCOURSE IV. 111

Person of infinite Dignity, *the only begotten of the Father, in whom he is always well pleased*; On the other Hand, he is intimately united to us, and of great Tenderness towards us, as being *Partaker of our Flesh and Blood*. His being really Man fitted him for teaching and instructing us in a Way suited to our Capacities, and for being a proper Example and Pattern for us to imitate. It qualified him for the Obedience he yielded, and for the Sufferings he endured on our Behalf, and rendered him both capable of dying for us, and of being raised from the Dead, and thereby exhibiting a visible Proof and Pledge of our own Resurrection to immortal Bliss. It fitted him for being a proper *High Priest for us, touched with a Feeling of our Infirmities*; and for appearing as an Advocate and Intercessor on our Behalf in *the heavenly Sanctuary*. And, finally, this rendereth his Exaltation a Source of Consolation and Joy: For what a Comfort must it be to reflect, that he who assumed our Nature, and is therefore so nearly related to us, *is now exalted at the right Hand of the Majesty on high, and is made Head over all Things to his Church*; that he hath an universal Kingdom and Sovereignty committed

mited to him, and shall at length be our final Judge! Justly therefore doth the Apostle lay a special Emphasis upon this, that, as *there is one God, so there is one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus.* i *Tim.* ii. 5. because, if he were not truly and properly Man, he could not be such a Mediator as our Case required. But, on the other Hand, his being not a mere dignified Man, but *the eternal Son of God, the Brightness of the Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person, in whom dwelleth all the Fulness of the Godhead bodily,* gives us the highest Assurance of his being able to accomplish the great Work of our Redemption and Salvation. It is this that deriveth a mighty Weight and Authority to the Instructions he hath given, and the Laws he hath prescribed, and adds a wonderful Force and Beauty to the Example he hath set before us. This gives an unparalleled Merit and Dignity to his Obedience, and the Sacrifice he has offered on our Behalf, and renders his Mediation and Intercession of the highest Efficacy and Prevalency. It is this that qualifies him for his universal Headship, and for exercising a glorious Sovereignty over Angels and Men, for raising the Dead and judging the World.

In Sum, it is this which rendereth him a proper Object of our Confidence and Trust, a complete and all-sufficient Saviour, able to fulfil his own glorious Promises, and to be *the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that obey him*. What a stable Foundation for *Rejoicing* is this, that we have such a Mediator provided for us, who hath the Power and Sufficiency of God in Conjunction with the Tenderness and Compassions of the human Nature!

From this general Consideration of the Incarnation of the Son of God, let us proceed more particularly to consider what he hath done in Consequence of it, for carrying on the glorious Work of our Redemption, and for discharging the Office of Mediator and Saviour.

And, First, One important Part of the Office committed to him was to be the great Interpreter of the Will of God to Mankind, and to bring a clear Revelation from Heaven *in the Father's Name*, for instructing Men in those Things which it most nearly concerneth them to know, and which are of the utmost Moment to their Duty and Happiness. It may reasonably be supposed, that to this great Mediator were principally owing the Dis-

114 DISCOURSE VI.

coveries which were made of the Divine Will to Mankind from the Beginning. St. *Peter* intimates, that it was by *the Spirit of Christ* that the Prophets and holy Men of God of old were inspired. *1 Pet. i. 2.* And it was a Notion which generally obtained in the ancient *Christian Church*, and which probably was derived from the Apostolical Age, that, in the Divine Appearances under the Old Testament, the *Logos*, who was *in the Fulness of Time* to assume human Flesh, had a special Concernment. But it was after his actual Incarnation, that he most fully executed his Office as *the great heavenly Teacher*. He then brought the most perfect Revelation that was ever given to Mankind: And accordingly he declared concerning himself, *I am the Light of the World; he that followeth me shall not walk in Darkness, but shall have the Light of Life. Joh. viii. 12.* He went about, *in the Days of his Flesh*, teaching and preaching the Things of the Kingdom of God. He instructed Men in the Nature of true Religion, and taught them to form the most just and worthy Notions of God, and of his incomparable Perfections, especially of his moral Attributes, his Righteousness, and Goodness, and Purity; and to *worship him* who is an infinite

DISCOURSE VI. 115

finite *Spirit in Spirit and in Truth*. He set their Duty before them in it's just Extent, and in the fairest Light, and gave them the most holy and excellent Laws and Precepts, exhibiting the most perfect Scheme of pure and refined Morality, yet without running into Extremes, that was ever published to the World. *Life and Immortality was by him brought into the most clear and open Light*; and, what especially calleth for our highest Thankfulness, he opened the glorious *Counsels of God* for our Salvation, and, *in the Name of his heavenly Father*, the sovereign Lord of the Universe, made a Publication of his free Grace and pardoning Mercy towards perishing Sinners of the human Race, and of the gracious Terms upon which he is willing to receive them to his Favour, and bestow upon them the most inestimable Benefits. The great Design of his personal Ministry was, as he himself represented it, *to call Sinners to Repentance*, to engage them to forsake their evil Ways, to be reconciled unto God, and to lay hold of his offered Mercy and Salvation. This was what he urged upon them in the tenderest and most affectionate Manner, and by Motives the most proper to work upon reasonable Beings. Thus did the incarnate Son of God admi-

116 DISCOURSE VI.

rably fulfil the Part of a *Mediator between God and Man*, not only by bringing the kindest Messages from God to sinful Men, and offering Grace and Mercy to them from him upon their penitent Return; but by doing all that was proper for him to do to engage them to a hearty Compliance with the gracious Proposals made to them, *in the Father's Name*. He endeavoured by all the Charms of Love and Goodness to overcome their Obstinacy. With this View he set his own Divine Character before them, and invited them to come to him as the appointed Saviour, and through him to return to *the Father of Mercies*, by an humble Faith, a sincere Repentance, and new Obedience. He gave the most satisfying Assurances, and made the most engaging Representations of the everlasting Glory and Felicity, *which God hath prepared for them that obey him*, and accept his offered Salvation. And on the other Hand, he let them know the just Punishment which should be inflicted upon those who should obstinately reject the Divine Mercy, and persist in a Course of presumptuous Sin and Disobedience. And surely nothing could be of greater Advantage to Mankind, or have a more manifest Tendency to recover them from the corrupt and wretched State

DISCOURSE VI. 117

State into which they were fallen, than to have these important Discoveries made to them by a Person of such infinite Dignity: For who so proper, so well qualified to instruct us in the Things concerning God and our eternal Salvation, and to give us the fullest Assurances of his kind Intentions, and the exceeding Riches of his Grace towards us, as he who is described to us as *the Word and Wisdom of the Father, his only begotten Son, full of Grace and Truth!* The Revelations and Messages he brings, *in the Name of God*, must come with a peculiar Weight and Authority, when made known to us by one who must be supposed to be perfectly acquainted with the Divine Will. We are told, that *no Man hath seen God at any Time; the only begotten Son, which is in the Bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.* Joh. i. 18. And, to render his Instructions more familiar, *he appeared in human Flesh*, whereby he was fitted for conversing with Men and accommodating himself to the Weakness and Infirmary of our Nature. This was one valuable End of his Incarnation, as the Apostle signifieth, when he saith, that *God who at sundry Times and in divers Manners spake unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last Days spoken unto us by his Son.* Heb.

118 DISCOURSE VI.

i. 1, 2. And not only did he instruct Men during his own personal Ministry here on Earth, but, after he was risen from the Dead, and was no longer to dwell and converse with them as before with Regard to his bodily Presence, he commissioned his Apostles, and assisted them by his Spirit, to *go into all the World, and to preach the Gospel to every Creature, i. e. to publish among the Nations the glad Tidings of Pardon and Salvation in his Name, and to reclaim them from their Idolatries, Vice, and Wickedness, to the Love and Obedience, the pure Worship and Service of God, and the Practice of true Holiness.* This Commission the Apostles faithfully executed, *teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever he commanded them.* And both our Saviour's own admirable Discourses *in the Days of his Flesh,* and the Gospel preached by his Apostles *in his Name,* and under the Direction of his Spirit, were committed to Writing; by which *Christ, the great Teacher of his Church, and Mediator of the new Covenant, still speaketh to us from Heaven.* Heb. xii. 25.

But, Secondly, in farther Pursuance of the great Design of our Salvation, the glorious Person, who was appointed to the Office and Character of a Saviour, exhibited the most
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perfect and lovely Example for our Imitation. In order to the recovering Men from their Corruption and Depravity, and restoring them to the Divine Favour and Image, it was proper not only to set before them a perfect Rule of Duty in the most pure and excellent Precepts, but also an Example of the most consummate Holiness and Virtue. This is what our Lord *Jesus Christ* hath fully done. The admirable Precepts he gave are beautifully exemplified in his own holy and unspotted Life and Practice. Examples have actually a greater Force than bare Precepts, how excellent soever. And what Example can be more engaging than that of *the incarnate Son of God, the brightest Image* of the invisible Deity? God, considered in his own infinite and incomprehensible Essence, is inaccessible to us frail Mortals, surrounded with dazzling Glory, which might be apt to overwhelm and astonish our feeble Natures: But in *Christ Jesus*, his well beloved Son, become incarnate, his amiable Excellencies are brought nearer to our View, and within the Reach of our Imitation. This Example must needs, when duly attended to, have a mighty Influence upon us, as it is the Example of a Person of such Divine Dignity, the great Saviour and Lover of our Natures,

who hath done and suffered so much for us, and to whom we are under such infinite Obligations. In him we may behold the most perfect Pattern of universal Righteousness and spotless Purity, of the most ardent Love to God and Zeal for the Divine Glory, of the most active and disinterested Benevolence towards Mankind, of the most admirable Self-denial, Meekness, Patience, and Resignation, and in a Word of *whatsoever is just and pure, venerable and lovely, virtuous and praiseworthy*. And it is certainly a wonderful Instance of the Divine Goodness, that God hath sent his own Son to dwell amongst Men, that he might shew us, in his own sacred Life and Practice, what Kind of Temper and Conduct it is that is most acceptable to the Deity, and by what Course of Action we shall best approve ourselves in his Sight, and be raised to the nearest Conformity to him. Who can express the sweet and powerful Attractions there must be in such an Example as this, whereby Virtue and Holiness is made visible to our Eyes in it's most lovely Form, and it's noblest Degree of Excellence?

Thirdly, The true *Christian rejoiceth in* Christ Jesus, on the Account of the illustrious Miracles he performed, which were
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so many in Number, so glorious in their Nature, so beneficial in their Tendency, that in them *the Glory of God* was most eminently displayed. It cannot reasonably be supposed that God would send his Son into the World upon so important an Errand as the Redeeming and Saving Sinners the human Race, without sufficient Credentials, which, if duly attended to, might have led Men to believe in him as in Reality the glorious and Divine Person which he declared himself to be. He appeared on Earth in mean outward Circumstances, without the Riches, Grandeur, or Glory of this World. But he had a Glory of an higher Nature attending him, even *the wonderful Works* which he performed; many of which are particularly mentioned by the Evangelists, though they themselves intimate, that it is only a small Part of them which is recorded. *The Blind received their Sight*, withered and perishing Limbs were restored at once, *the Lame were made to walk, and the Dumb and Deaf to hear and speak; the Lepers were cleansed*; great Numbers that were brought to him from all Parts, and who laboured under the most incurable and desperate Diseases, were healed, without failing in any one Instance; and *the Dead were raised to Life*: And all this

this by a sovereign Word or Touch. With Authority he commanded even the unclean Spirits, and they obeyed him. Many of his Miracles were performed with an Air of Divine Sovereignty and Grandeur, becoming the Lord of Nature. He only said to the stormy Wind and Tempest, and to the raging Sea, *Peace, be still*; and the boisterous Elements obeyed. He gave the powerful Word, *Lazarus, come forth*; and the dead Man, who had been four Days in the Grave, immediately arose. Twice did he feed several Thousands, at once, with *a few Loaves and small Fishes*. His Miracles were not merely Acts of supernatural Power, but of God-like Goodness and Compassion to the Bodies and Souls of Men; and they were done for the most Part in open View, in the Presence of Multitudes, and even of his most obstinate Enemies, those who were most strongly prejudiced against him. Justly therefore did he himself appeal to his *wonderful Works* as manifest Proofs that *he was in the Father. and the Father in him*. John xiv. 11. They were such as became the Divinity in human Flesh, and shewed that he really was what *the Voice from the magnificent Glory* declared him, *the beloved Son of God, in whom he was well*

well pleased. And, what eminently distinguished him from all other Prophets and Workers of Miracles, he not only wrought the most marvellous Works in his own Person, but commissioned and enabled his Disciples to perform Works of the same Kind *in his Name*, and by Power derived from him. Taking all these Things together, what an astonishing and delightful Scene openeth to our View! It shewed that something was now carrying on of the highest Importance, far exceeding what the World had ever seen or known before. And the true *Christian* cannot review all this without Wonder and Joy.

But, Fourthly, It is farther to be considered, that this most excellent Person, *the Son of God in human Flesh*, submitted, for our Sakes and in Obedience to his heavenly Father's Will, to the deepest Humiliations, the most dolorous Agonies and Passions, and even to *Death itself*, the cruel and ignominious *Death of the Cross*. This, at first View, instead of furnishing Matter of *Rejoicing*, may seem to be only fitted to produce Sorrow and Amazement. Nothing can possibly be more affecting than the Accounts given us by the Evangelists of our Saviour's last Sufferings, which were attended with whatsoever is most
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grievous and shocking to Nature. Behold him in his direful *Agony and bloody Sweat, his Soul exceeding sorrowful even unto Death,* condemned as an Impostor and Blasphemer, his Head crowned with piercing Thorns, his Body torn with bloody Stripes, hanging on the Cross between two Thieves, treated with the greatest Ignominy and Cruelty by Men, assaulted by the Powers of Darkness, and at length put to a most painful and accursed Death: And then consider who it was that suffered all this, *the Son of God* incarnate, the Divine *Immanuel*, who had *gone about doing Good* to the Bodies and to the Souls of Men; and that *he was delivered up to these Sufferings by the determinate Counsel and Fore-knowledge of God.* Acts ii. 23. *It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to Grief,* as the Prophet expresseth it, *Is. liii. 10.* When we consider this, it is natural to inquire, what was the Cause and Design of so amazing a Transaction? Far be it from us to think that God, who delighteth not in the Pains and Sufferings of his Creatures, took Pleasure in the grievous Sufferings of his perfectly innocent and well-beloved Son, in themselves considered! But, as it seemed fit to the Divine Wisdom, that, in order to our being pardoned,

done, and raised from our perishing guilty State to the Favour of God and eternal Happiness, there should be a Mediator of infinite Dignity to interpose on our Behalf; so also that this Mediator should in our Nature and Stead submit to the most grievous Sufferings, to make us deeply sensible what our Iniquities had deserved, and to manifest God's just Displeasure against Sin, and vindicate the Authority of his Government and Laws, even in the very Methods of our Reconciliation. Accordingly it is observed concerning *Christ* the Mediator, that *he was wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities; the Chastisement of our Peace was upon him, and by his Stripes we are healed.* II. liii. 5. That *he suffered for Sins, the Just for the Unjust, that he might bring us unto God.* 1 Pet. iii. 18. and that *God made him to be Sin for us, who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him.* 2 Cor. v. 21. And God's not sparing his own Son, but thus delivering him up for us all, is deservedly insisted upon, in the New Testament, as exhibiting the most admirable Display of the transcendent Greatness of his Love towards us. And at the same Time the Love of *Christ*, in freely giving himself for us an Offering and a Sacrifice,

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is juſtly celebrated as a *Love that paſſeth Knowledge*, and which hath a Height and Depth, a Length and Breadth in it, which we cannot fully comprehend.

And not only is *Chriſt's* Suffering for us repreſented as a marvellous Inſtance and Proof of his Love to Mankind, but alſo of his Obedience to his heavenly Father. This is what *St. Paul* ſignifies when he ſaith, that *Chriſt became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs*. Phil. ii. 8. And our Saviour himſelf, ſpeaking of *his laying down his Life for us*, declares, that this *Commandment he had received from his Father*. John x. 13. And ſurely, when we conſider the Sufferings he endured in each amazing Circumſtance, compared with the Dignity of his Perſon; and that he voluntarily ſubmitted to all this, becauſe it was *the Father's Will* that he ſhould do ſo for the Redemption and Salvation of ſinful Men; we muſt acknowledge that never was there ſo aſtoniſhing a Self-denial, ſo profound a Reſignation, ſuch an abſolute unreſerved Submiſſion and Obedience to the Will of God, as well as ſuch a marvellous Inſtance of Goodneſs and Benevolence towards Mankind. By this Obedience of the Son of God in our Nature, as manifested in his laſt laſt Sufferings

DISCOURSE VI. 127

ferings and Death, joined with the perfect Obedience of his whole holy and unspotted Life, God and his Law were most signally honoured, which had been greatly dishonoured by Man's Disobedience. This rendered the Sacrifice he offered of a *sweet-smelling Savour, i. e.* infinitely pleasing to his heavenly Father. On the Account of this his most meritorious Obedience and Sufferings on our Behalf, he is said to be *the Propitiation for our Sins*; and Pardon, Peace, and Salvation are represented as flowing to us through his Blood. To this the Apostle refers, when he saith, *We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the Atonement.* His Blood is called by himself *the Blood of the New Testament, or Covenant, shed for the Remission of Sins.* Matt. xxvi. 28. and, by St. Paul, *the Blood of the everlasting Covenant.* Hebr. xiii. 20. It was a Consideration of what he hath done and suffered for us, pursuant to the glorious Scheme laid in the Counsels of the Divine Wisdom and Love for our Redemption, that the Covenant of Grace, in it's merciful Terms and *exceeding great and precious Promises*, is confirmed and established, and the glorious Blessings of it have been communicated

municated from the Beginning, and shall be to the End of the World.

Other valuable Ends might be mentioned, which the Sufferings and Death of *Christ*, the Mediator and Saviour, were intended to answer: He thereby testified the Truth of the Doctrine he had taught, and *sealed it with his Blood*; and especially the Profession he has made of his being *the Christ, the Son of the living God*. He also thereby shewed what severe Trials and Sufferings the most excellent Persons may be exposed to for the Cause of God, of Truth and Righteousness; and gave an admirable Example of Constancy under such Sufferings, and of the most perfect Patience and Meekness under the greatest Injuries, as well as of an amiable forgiving Disposition and Love even to his Enemies, for whom he prayed and interceded with his dying Breath. Finally, He died for us, that *by Death he might destroy him that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil, and might deliver those who, through Fear of Death, were all their Lifetime subject to Bondage*. Heb. ii. 14. By submitting to the Stroke of Death he disarmed it of it's *Sting*, and opened a Way for triumphing over it in his glorious Resurrection. Thus, in whatsoever View

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we consider the Death of *Christ*, there is a Divine Glory in it. We may behold him *making Peace by the Blood of his Cross*, and Light and Joy springing up out of the Depths of his Agonies and Sorrows. Such are the many salutary Effects of his Passion, and the excellent Ends for which it was designed, that we must acknowledge it to be one of the most solemn and awful, yet one of the most pleasing Scenes, which can be presented to our Minds. *A crucified Jesus, which was to the Jews a Stumbling-Block, and to the Greeks Foolishness*, is the worthy Object of the *Christian's* Glorifying and Rejoicing. And we may justly say, with the Apostle, upon observing the admirable Display of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness in this Part of the Gospel Scheme, that *it became him, for whom are all Things, and by whom are all Things, in bringing many Sons unto Glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through Sufferings.* Heb. ii. 10.

*On Delighting in the gracious Methods of
our Redemption by Jesus Christ.*

DISCOURSE VII.

R O M A N S V. II:

*—We joy in God through our Lord Jesus
Christ.—*

IN our former Discourses on this Subject it was shewn, that our Lord *Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God*, at the Time appointed by the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, actually assumed human Flesh: That he brought the clearest and fullest Revelation of the Divine Will which was ever given to Mankind: That he also exhibited the most perfect Example of universal Holiness, Goodness, and Purity for our Imitation: That he per-

formed the most illustrious Miracles, Acts of Godlike Power and beneficent Goodness; and that he at length submitted, for our Sakes and in Obedience to his heavenly Father's Will, to the most grievous Sufferings and to *Death itself*, that *he might make Atonement for our Sins, and might obtain eternal Redemption for us.* All these Things lay a just Foundation for *our Rejoicing in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The next Thing to be considered openeth to us a still more glorious and delightful Scene, *viz. Christ's Resurrection from the Dead, and Ascension into Heaven, and the Glories of his exalted State.* It was necessary for wise and valuable Purposes that he should suffer and die; but *he did not continue under the Power of Death: God hath raised him up, saith St. Peter, having loosed the Bonds of Death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.* Acts. ii. 24. The Resurrection of our Lord *Jesus Christ* is an Article of great Importance in the *Christian Scheme.* It was what he himself had foretold, and appealed to as a most illustrious Confirmation of his Divine Mission, and of the Truth of that Character under which he appeared as *the Son of God, the Saviour*

DISCOURSE VII. 133

Saviour of the World: He was declared, or demonstrated, as St. Paul speaks, to be the Son of God with Power by his Resurrection from the Dead. Rom. i. 4. It was also an open Declaration of God's Acceptance of his Oblation and Sacrifice, and that he was infinitely well pleased with what *Christ* had done and suffered for the Redemption of the human Race. And, finally, it was a sensible Proof and Pledge of our Resurrection to immortal Life. *Christ* had promised concerning those that believe and obey him, that *he would raise them up at the last Day. Joh. vi. 39, 40.* And his Rising himself from the Dead, according to his own Prediction, shewed that he is able to accomplish this glorious Promise, and that it may be safely depended upon: *Now is Christ risen from the Dead, saith the Apostle, and become the First-fruits of them that slept. 1 Cor. xv. 20.* His Resurrection is the Pledge of theirs, as the First-fruits were of the following Harvest. And again, *if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him, viz. at his second Coming. 1 Thess. iv. 14.*

Christ, having shewed himself alive after his Passion by many infallible Proofs,

ascended into Heaven, and *was received up into Glory*; he was taken up in his human Nature, in which he had descended to such amazing Depths of Suffering and Abasement, to Joy and Glory inexpressible. This is a ravishing Contemplation! How should it gladden our Hearts to consider the Glories which *Christ's* exalted Humanity is now invested with, as the Reward of his Obedience and Sufferings? For we are told, that, *because he became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross; therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every Name.* Phil. ii. 8, 9. Thus, in this admirable Saviour, we have both the most shining Example of holy unreserved Obedience, and also the most eminent Proof and Specimen of the glorious Reward which shall attend it.

But we are not to regard *Christ's* Exaltation and Glory merely as a Reward of his Obedience and Sufferings, but as necessary to his farther Discharge of his mediatorial Office. We must not imagine, that, upon his Entrance into Heaven, he left off interesting himself for us of the human Race. He still pursueth his glorious Design which he had undertaken for our Salvation; and there are two Things to be

be observed concerning the Exercise of his mediatorial Office in Heaven. The one is his Appearing in our Behalf as *our great High Priest, and making perpetual Intercession for us*: The other is his being invested with an universal Authority and Dominion as *the great King and Head over all Things to his Church*.

With Regard to the former it is observed by the sacred Writer to the *Hebrews*, that *we have a great High Priest that is passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God*. Heb. iv. 14. It was necessary to the Fulfilling of his Priestly Office, that, as he had offered himself a Sacrifice for us upon the Cross, so he should make Intercession for us in the heavenly Sanctuary. And this Intercession is founded on his Atonement, and on the Merit of his Obedience and Sufferings. To this Purpose it is declared, that Christ, *being an High Priest of good Things to come, not by the Blood of Goats and Calves, but by his own Blood, entered in once into the holy Place, having obtained eternal Redemption for us. He is entered, not into the holy Places made with Hands, which are the Figures of the true, but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the Presence of God for us*. Heb. ix. 11, 12, 24. And we are assured, that *he is*

able to save them to the uttermost those that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make Intercession for us. Heb. vii. 25. The Manner of this his Intercession we are not able distinctly to explain, but it seems to be understood of a most prevalent and efficacious Interposition on our Behalf, whereby he procureth for us from his heavenly Father the most valuable Benefits, and commendeth our sincere though imperfect Services to his gracious Acceptance. Accordingly we are expressly required to offer up our Prayers for the Blessings we stand in Need of in the Name of *Christ* the Mediator: Our *spiritual Sacrifices* are said to be *acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* 1 *Pet.* ii. 5. And it is *through him that we have Access by one Spirit unto the Father.* Eph. ii. 18. And God's having appointed this Method of transacting with us through his Son hath a happy Tendency to dispel our guilty Jealousies and Fears, and gives us an encouraging Assurance that he will deal graciously and favourably with us? What a mighty Consolation is it to Creatures conscious of so many Sins and Defects, that *the Son of God*, who by the Divine Appointment took upon him human Flesh, and did and suffered so much for us here

on Earth, continueth, now that he is in the Height of his Exaltation and Glory, to mediate and intercede for us as our *great High Priest and Advocate with the Father*, and that we are allowed and commanded to come in his prevailing Name! The Apostle to the *Hebrews* justly draws this Conclusion from it: *Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in Time of Need.* Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16. Thus it appears, that *Christ's Priesthood in Heaven*, and his Intercession for us there, is a just Ground of *rejoicing in God through our Lord Jesus Christ*.

But this Joy will be still heightened, if we consider that this great Mediator and Saviour is invested with an universal Authority and Dominion, the more effectually to fulfil the Ends of his mediatorial Undertaking, and accomplish the glorious Work of our Salvation. To this Purpose St. Paul declares, *that God, having raised him from the Dead, hath set him at his own Right Hand in the heavenly Places, far above all Principality and Power, and Might, and Dominion, and every Name that is named, not only in this World, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all Things under his Feet, and gave him to be the Head*
over

138 DISCOURSE VII.

over all Things to the Church. Eph. i. 20, 21, 22. His Dominion is of universal Extent, *Angels, Authorities, and Powers being made subject unto him.* 1 Pet. iii. 22. Those glorious Beings are employed in serving the Interests of his Kingdom, and are sent forth by him as ministering Spirits, to minister for them who shall be Heirs of Salvation. Heb. i. 14. Thus it pleased God to order it, that, as the Apostle expresses it, *in the Dispensation of the Fulness of the Time might be gathered together in one all Things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on Earth, even in him.* Eph. i. 10. But Christ is in an especial Manner the *Head of his Body the Church.* Col. i. 18. As such, he hath prescribed Laws, and instituted Ordinances to be observed in his Church throughout all Ages. Soon after his Ascension into Heaven, he gave an illustrious Proof of his Exaltation and Glory, by pouring forth the Holy Spirit from on high in a plentiful Effusion of his extraordinary Gifts and miraculous Powers upon the Apostles and first Publishers of the Gospel, who were thereby admirably qualified for the important Work upon which they were sent; and not only upon them, but upon great Numbers of those
 who

who by their Ministry were converted to the Faith of *Christ*. Accompanied with such glorious Evidences of a Divine Light and Power, the Religion of *Jesus* soon made an amazing Progress, though it was destitute of all worldly Advantages, and had the most unfurmountable Difficulties to encounter with. The *Pagan* Superstition and Idolatry fell before it. Thousands were every-where *turned from Idols to serve the living and true God*; and vast Numbers, both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, in Opposition to their strongest Prejudices, were brought over, in that very Age, to the Belief and Acknowledgment of *Jesus* who hath been crucified, as their Saviour and Lord.

And not only did an exalted Saviour pour forth the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghost in the first Ages of the *Christian* Church, but he still continueth to be the great Dispenser of spiritual Blessings and Benefits, and to communicate the ordinary gracious Influences of the Spirit. *St. Paul's* usual Salutation at the Beginning of his Epistles is this: *Grace, Mercy, and Peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ*; intimating that all Manner of spiritual Benefits are communicated to us from *God*
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the Father, as the supreme original Author; and from *Jesus Christ*, as the immediate Dispenser of them. And he elsewhere saith, that *it hath pleased the Father that in him should all Fulness dwell*. Col. i. 19. *i. e.* a Fulness of Grace and of the Spirit: And accordingly St. *John* observeth, that *of his Fulness have all we received, and Grace for Grace*. John i. 16. And what a Comfort is it to be assured, that in *Christ*, the great Head of his Church and Mediator of the New Covenant, the Power of communicating all necessary Supplies of Grace is vested by the sovereign Appointment of the Father, for our Use and Benefit, for purifying and healing our distempered Souls, for assisting our sincere Endeavours in the Performance of our Duty, and forming us into a Meetness for the heavenly Glory! And to him it also belongeth to put us into the actual Possession of that Glory, as he himself signifies in his last solemn Address to his heavenly Father here on Earth, saying, *Thou hast given him (i. e. to thy Son) Power over all Flesh, that he should give eternal Life to as many as thou hast given him*. John xvii. 2. He will, upon their Departure out of this World, receive their separated Spirits, and, finally,

DISCOURSE VII. 141

to complete their Salvation, will raise their dead Bodies from the Grave at his second glorious Appearing. And Nothing can be more astonishing and delightful than the Idea the Scripture gives us of it: He himself assures us, that *he shall then come in his own Glory, and in the Glory of his heavenly Father, and in the Glory of his holy Angels.* Luke ix. 26. Myriads of those blessed Spirits shall then form his illustrious Train, attended with a Pomp and Splendor exceeding the utmost Flight of human Imagination: Then *all that are in their Graves shall bear his Voice, and shall come forth; they that have done Good unto the Resurrection of Life, and they that have done Evil unto the Resurrection of Damnation.* John v. 28, 29. *The Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a Shout, with the Voice of the Archangel, and with the Trump of God; and the Dead in Christ shall rise first.* 1 Thesi. iv. 16. They shall be raised in *Incorruption, Power, and Glory.* And how transporting is it to look forwards in the Views of Faith to that happy Time, when *this Corruptible shall put on Incorruption, and this Mortal shall put on Immortality, and Death shall be swallowed up in Victory!* 1 Cor. xv. 53, 54. when *Christ shall change our vile Body, that it*
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may be fashioned like unto his own glorious Body; according to the Working whereby he is able even to subdue all Things unto himself. Phil. iii. 21. Then shall this great Mediator, who at his first Coming took upon him the Form of a Servant, and descended to the lowest Humiliations and Abasements, have the highest Honour put upon him before Heaven and Earth: For he shall judge the World in the Father's Name, and shall dispense eternal Retributions. This completes the glorious Scheme, and is ordered with great Wisdom, Righteousness, and Goodness: For it must needs give a mighty Force to his Laws, that to him we must be accountable for our Obedience or Disobedience to those Laws, and that he will himself have it in his Power to fulfil his own glorious Promises, and to execute his awful Threatenings. This tendeth to strike a just Terror into the obstinate Opposers of his Authority and Grace, and at the same Time is full of Consolation and Encouragement to the Upright and Sincere: For what can afford a more manifest Proof that we shall be dealt with, in that *great Day*, not according to the utmost Rigour of strict Justice, but with great Tenderness and Equity, and that all proper Allowances shall

shall be made to our Infirmities, as far as they are consistent with Sincerity, than that we are to be tried and judged by the most benevolent Saviour and Lover of our Natures? *Come, ye blessed of my Father,* will he then say to those that loved and served him in Truth and with an upright Heart, *inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World.* Then shall he present *the whole Church of the First-born,* consisting of all the good Men that ever lived, from the Beginning of the World to the Consummation of all Things; *he shall present them faultless to his heavenly Father with exceeding Joy,* and shall instate them in the unchangeable Possession of a complete everlasting Felicity. There shall they be associated to *an innumerable Company of Angels,* with whom and with one another they shall enjoy the Pleasures of the most perfect celestial Love and Harmony, and shall be for ever blessed with the immediate transforming Vision of the Deity. Then shall *Christ* deliver up his mediatorial Kingdom to the Father, the great Ends of it being obtained, and *God shall be all in all.* All after that shall be one uninterrupted Scene of Bliss and Glory, beyond what the Heart of Man can now conceive. Our Souls
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are lost in the boundless Prospect, swallowed up in sacred Extasy and Joy!

Thus we have endeavoured, though in a very imperfect Manner, to trace the great Work of our Redemption by *Jesus Christ*, from it's glorious Original in God's eternal Counsels, through the several intermediate Steps of it's Accomplishment, to the Consummation of it at *Christ's* second Coming. And in every View it appeareth to be wonderful and glorious, wisely adjusted in all it's Parts, admirably directed and adapted to promote the most excellent Ends, the Glory of God, and the Happiness of Mankind. There cannot be a more sublime and finished Idea of the Mediator than is here set before us. Every Thing is to be found on him that could be supposed to enter into the Character of a complete and all-sufficient Saviour. What an admirable Harmony is there in all his sacred Offices! What a wonderful Fitness and Congruity in every Part of his Undertaking! So that one would be apt to think, that every real Friend and Lover of Mankind should at least wish that this Scheme were true, and that there were such a Mediator and Saviour provided for us, as the Gospel representeth *Jesus Christ* to be. This Me-
diator

diator is but one. The same wonderful Person is both our divine Teacher, and our most perfect Example; our great High Priest, who offered himself a Sacrifice for us, and our Advocate and Intercessor with the Father. *He is Head over all Things to his Church,* invested with an universal Authority and Dominion for our Benefit; and is the Dispenser of all spiritual and saving Blessings; and, to complete all, he shall be our final Judge, and shall then appear to be, in the fullest and most glorious Sense, *the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that obey him.* Thus shall the great Work be accomplished by the same Hand by which it was all along carried on *in the Father's Name.* If there were many Mediators, we might be at a Loss, and distracted in our Thoughts which to apply to. Suspicions might arise in our Minds, that none of them were sufficient. Besides, it would tend to introduce Confusion in our Worship, and open a Way to Polytheism and Idolatry. The *Heathens* had a Multiplicity of Idol-Gods and Mediators; to whom they addressed their Worship, whilst *the only living and true God* was in a great Measure neglected. But the Gospel-Scheme is simple and uniform: As *there is but one God, so*

there is but one Mediator between God and Man. And this Mediator is of infinite Dignity, every Way sufficient to answer all the Exigencies of our Case, *able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him.* The stated Order of the Gospel-Worship is this, that, through *Christ*, the great appointed Mediator, *we have Access by one Spirit unto the Father.* In loving, obeying, and honouring the Mediator, we love, obey, and honour *the Father which sent him*, and whose sovereign Wisdom, Grace, and Love are represented as the glorious Source of the whole Design. Far therefore from drawing off our Regards from God our heavenly Father, or intercepting that Love, Trust, Adoration, and Obedience that is most justly due to him, (which is an Objection that hath been often urged against the Gospel-Scheme of the Mediator) it rather heighteneth our Obligations to him, our Confidence in his Grace, and our Admiration of his Goodness, in that *he so loved the World as to send his Son to save and to redeem us.* As in the Mediatorial Scheme all is admirably contrived for our Benefit and Comfort; so all is ultimately referred to *the Glory of God the Father*, whose incomparable Perfections, his Wisdom, his Righteousness, and Holiness, and especially

DISCOURSE VII. 147

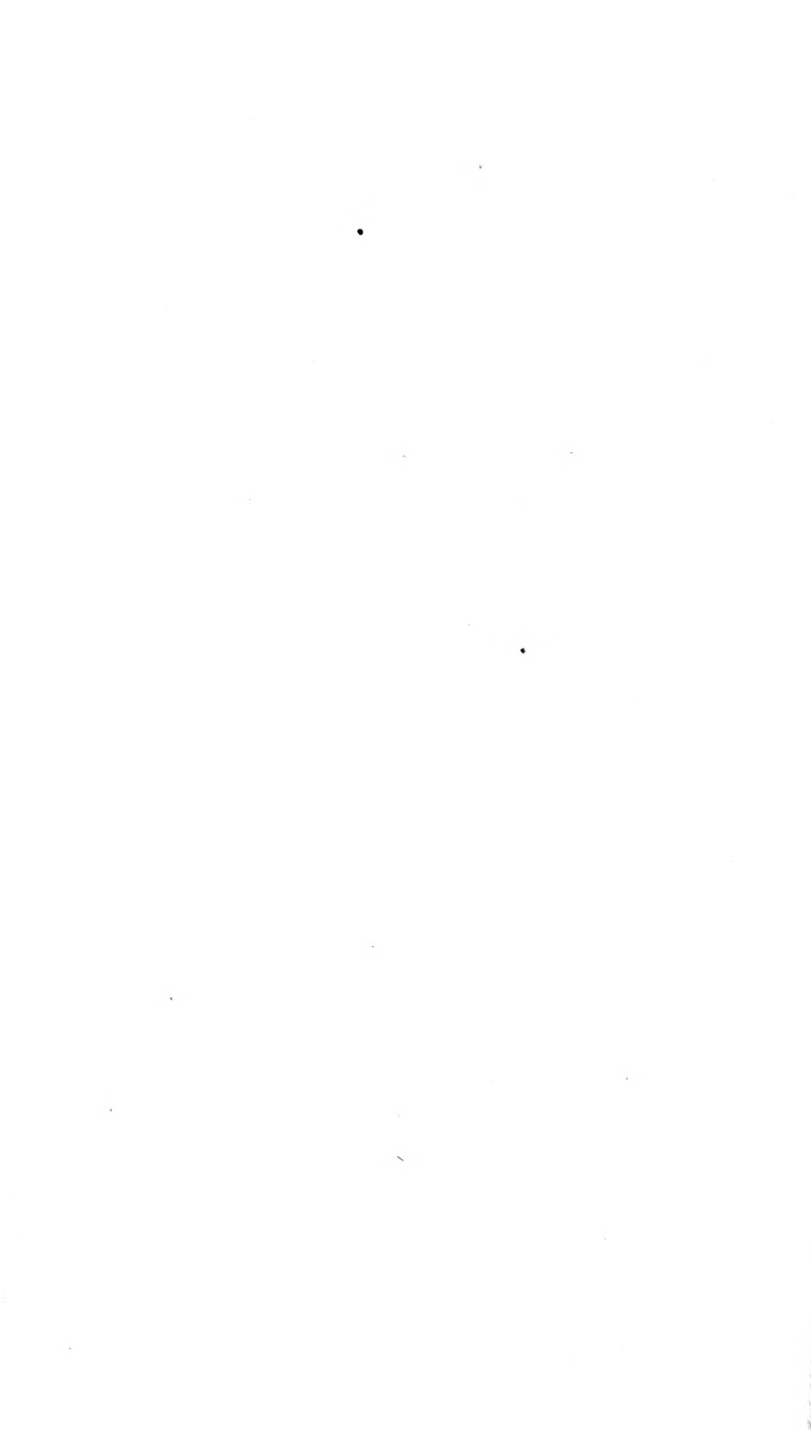
especially his incomprehensible Grace and Love, here shine forth with a most attractive Harmony and Beauty. What an admirable Method is this of dealing with sinful Creatures! How becoming the Glory of his infinite Majesty!

It is proper to observe, on this Occasion, that the Methods of our Salvation through *Jesus Christ* are *Things which the Angels desire to look into*, as St. Peter affirmeth us, 1 Pet. i. 12. St. Paul, having said, that *great is the Mystery of Godliness, God was manifest in the Flesh*, adds, that *he was seen of Angels*. 1 Tim. iii. 16. The Redeemer's Birth was celebrated with Hymns of Joy by *a whole Multitude of the heavenly Host*. This exhibited a wonderful Spectacle to those blessed Spirits, which could not but engage their Attention. With what Astonishment did they behold *the Son of God dwelling in human Flesh*, doing and suffering so much on Earth for the Salvation of sinful Men, offering himself to be *the Propitiation for the Sins of the World*, and afterwards ascending with his risen Body into Heaven, and *there appearing for us*, as our great High Priest, *in the heavenly Sanctuary*, and exercising an universal Sovereignty for carrying on the gracious Purposes of his Mediatorial Kingdom!

dom. The Apostle intimates, that *now unto the Principalities and Powers in heavenly Places is made known, by or in the Church, the manifold Wisdom of God, viz.* as shining forth in the admirable Work of our Redemption. *Eph. iii. 10.* This is a Theme fit to employ seraphic Minds. The Glory of it is not confined to the narrow Bounds of our Earth, but spreads through those boundless Realms of Light and Bliss. And should not we take a Pleasure in exercising our Thoughts on that glorious Subject, which filleth the holy Angels with Wonder and Delight, and in which we are more nearly concerned than they!

How much therefore are those in the Wrong, who represent the Gospel as a mean and gloomy Scheme! It speaketh Terror indeed to the obstinately Impenitent and Disobedient, who presumptuously persist in their vicious Courses; and, if it spake Peace to such Persons, it would be a strong Proof of it's Falshood and evil Tendency. But to penitent Sinners, who are heartily willing to forsake their evil Ways, and apply themselves in good Earnest to the Practice of Righteousness and true Holiness, it gives the highest possible Comfort and Encouragement. It furnisheth the strongest Assurance of God's Readiness.

to pardon all their Transgressions, and to receive them into his Grace and Favour. It sets their Duty before them in the most amiable and engaging Light, and promiseth them the gracious Aids of the Holy Spirit to assist their Endeavours in the Performance of it, and that *God will give eternal Life* as the Reward of their sincere though imperfect Obedience. In a Word, to good and upright Souls it opens all the Springs of Consolation and Joy; it displays all the Charms of infinite Love, and presents the most glorious and transporting Subjects to our Thoughts which can enter into the human Mind. It may therefore be justly said, that Nothing can possibly represent God under a more amiable Idea than the Gospel of *Jesus*, or be better fitted to engage us to *delight ourselves in him*. With what Thankfulness and Joy should we then entertain the happy Discoveries! and pursue our Meditations till, with Hearts full of grateful Devotion, we join in that celestial Hymn of Praise, *Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power, be unto him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!*



On Delighting in the Laws of God.

DISCOURSE VIII.

PSALM cxix. 47.

*I will delight myself in thy Commandments,
which I have loved.*

IT is the great Advantage of Religion, that it proposeth the noblest Objects to our Contemplation which can possibly be presented to the human Mind; the eternal and self-existent God, his glorious Attributes and Perfections, his wonderful Works of Creation and Providence, and the admirable Methods of our Redemption and Salvation by our Lord *Jesus Christ*. These Things not only tend to improve and elevate the Soul, but fur-

nish a divine Satisfaction and Delight. This appears from what hath been already offered upon this Subject. But Religion doth not consist merely in the Knowledge and Contemplation of sacred Truth, but in the Practice of those Duties which are required of us in the Divine Law. And that this also is a Source of pure and rational *Delight* I shall now endeavour to shew. It must be acknowledged indeed that Persons of a vicious Taste, and who are under the Power of corrupt Lusts and Appetites, are apt to look upon the Laws of God, and the Duties there required, as very rigorous and severe. Against these their strongest Prejudices lie. But to Minds rightly disposed, and which can form a true Judgment of Things, *the Commandments of God* appear not only to be just and reasonable, but, when faithfully obeyed and practised, to be *delightful* too. The best of Men in all Ages have found them so by their own Experience. It is given as the Character of the Man who is pronounced *blessed*, that *his Delight is in the Law of the Lord*. Ps. i. 2. and that *he delighteth greatly in God's Commandments*. Ps. cxii. 1. How often doth the Psalmist

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DISCOURSE VIII. 153

ist express, in the strongest Terms, the high Affection and Esteem he had for *the Laws of God*, and the great Pleasure he found in them! *More to be desired are they than Gold, yea, than much fine Gold; sweeter also than Honey or the Honey-comb.*

Pf. xix. 10. *Thy Testimonies have I taken as an Heritage for ever; for they are the Rejoicing of my Heart.* Pf. cxix. 111.

What Warmth of Divine Affection gloweth in those Expressions, *Oh how I love thy Law!—I opened my Mouth and panted; for I longed for thy Commandments.—My Soul hath kept thy Testimonies, and I love them exceedingly.* Ib. Ver. 97, 131, 167.

And, in the Words I have chosen for the Subject of this Discourse, he declares it, as his deliberate Purpose, *I will delight myself in thy Commandments, which I have loved.* It ought greatly to recommend

them to our Esteem that they are *God's Commandments.* How pleasing must it be

to a good Man, when engaged in any Course of Action, to be able to reflect—

“ When I am doing this, I am doing

“ what *God requireth* of me: I am serv-

“ ing and obeying the greatest and best

“ of Beings, my Creator and sovereign

“ Lord, my most generous and bountiful

“ Benefactor, to whom I am under the

“ highest

“ highest possible Obligations, and in
 “ whom alone I can be happy.” If we
 were wholly unacquainted with the parti-
 cular Reasons of *the Divine Commands*,
 yet we might be sure that they must be
 founded on the wisest and justest Reasons,
 since Nothing can proceed from a Being
 of infinite Wisdom, Goodness, and Purity,
 but what is wise, and good, and pure.
 But it is a mighty Advantage, when we
 ourselves, upon an impartial Consideration
 of *God’s Commandments*, can plainly see
 that they are in themselves most reasonable
 and excellent, and that the Practice of
 them is conducive to the true Happiness
 and Perfection of our Nature, and is fitted
 to afford a solid Pleasure and Satisfaction
 to the Mind.

To set this in a proper Light, let us
 take a View of *the Divine Commandments*,
 as they are usually distributed under three
 Heads: Some of them relate to the
 Duties we more immediately owe to
 God; others to those we owe to our
 Fellow-creatures; others relate more im-
 mediately to ourselves, and to the right
 Government of our own Appetites and
 Passions. These several Branches of our
 Duty are plainly referred to in that noble
 and comprehensive Passage, Tit. ii. 11,
 12. *The Grace of God, which bringeth Sal-
 vation,*

vation, hath appeared unto all Men, teaching us that, denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World.

I shall begin with considering that Part of the Duty required of us which more immediately relates to God, and which the Apostle in the Passage now cited expresses by *Living godly in this present World*. In Scripture Language the the Whole of practical Religion is sometimes called *Godliness*, to signify the necessary Relation it hath to the Deity; that a religious Regard to the supreme Being is essential to a holy and virtuous Life; and that the Duty we immediately owe to God is an eminent Part of the Duty required of us in the Divine Law. And it is with a peculiar Reference to this that I shall now consider it.

Our Living godly, taken in this View, includeth the following Things:

That we must have a firm Belief of the Existence and Providence of God, and must have our Souls possessed with just and worthy Conceptions of his glorious and incomparable Perfections, and, in Consequence of this, our Hearts must be brought under the Influence of suitable holy Affections and Dispositions towards him.

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That we must render him that religious Worship and Adoration that is justly due to him, and must be diligent in the Observance of those sacred Rites and Ordinances which he hath appointed in his Word.

That we must aspire after a Conformity to him in his amiable moral Excellencies, as far as he is imitable by such Creatures as we are.

And, finally, that we must be careful to maintain a constant Regard to him in our general Course, having an Eye to his Providence in the Events which befall us, and doing what we do as in his Sight, in Obedience to his Authority, and in a Subordination to his Glory as our supreme governing End.

These are the Things in which *true Godliness*, or the Practice of the Duty required of us in the Divine Law towards God, doth eminently consist. And it will not be difficult to shew, that the Exercising ourselves this Way tendeth to promote our Happiness, and to produce a Pleasure and Satisfaction of the noblest Kind.

Let us consider these Things distinctly.

First, *True Godliness* necessarily includeth a firm Belief of the Existence and Providence

Providence of God, just and worthy Conceptions of his glorious and incomparable Perfections, and, in Consequence of this, that our Hearts must be brought under the Influence of suitable holy Affections and Dispositions towards him. It is observed by the inspired Writer of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, that *he that cometh unto God, i. e. he that would serve him in an acceptable Manner, must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Heb. xi. 6. A lively Faith in an invisible Deity lies at the Foundation of all Religion and Godliness: And indeed this is a Principle which cometh to us confirmed by such clear and strong Evidence, that one would think no reasonable and considerate Mind could seriously and in good Earnest doubt of it. This vast Fabric of the Universe, which we continually behold, and particularly the wonderful Frame of our own Bodies, and the noble Faculties of our Souls, lead us by a just and natural Consequence to one supreme original Cause, *who was from everlasting*, who gave Being to all other Things, but derived his own Being from none; *who created Heaven and Earth, and all Things that are therein*; and disposed them in that beautiful Order in which they

now appear; and who continually upholdeth and preserveth this universal Frame, and governeth the Creatures he hath made by his constant superintending Providence.

And, as we must have a firm Persuasion of the Being and Providence of God, so our Minds must be possessed with just and worthy Conceptions of his glorious and incomparable Attributes and Perfections; that he is a Being of almighty and irresistible Power, *who can do whatsoever he pleaseth*; of immense Greatness, *who filleth Heaven and Earth*, and is intimately present to every Part of this vast Creation; that *his Wisdom and Understanding is infinite*, and he knoweth, in every possible Instance, what is best and fittest to be done; that he is of the most diffusive Goodness and Benignity, *and his tender Mercies are over all his Works*; that he is a Being of spotless Purity and Holiness, of impartial Righteousness and Equity, of invariable Faithfulness and Truth; that he is the supreme universal Lord, who giveth Laws to his reasonable Creatures, and to whom they must be accountable for their Conduct; and that he will punish the obstinate Transgressors of his Laws, and will reward those that love and serve him

him in Sincerity; and, finally, that he is the chief Good, the Fountain of all Joy and Glory and Felicity, in whom alone we can be completely happy. A Sense of these Things, when duly received and entertained in the Heart, hath a natural Tendency to produce correspondent holy Affections and Dispositions there: A superlative Love to God, a profound Reverence of his Divine Majesty, an absolute unreserved Submission to his Authority and Resignation to his Will, and a steady ingenuous Trust and Confidence in him; all which are necessarily concluded in *true Godliness*, and are required of us in his holy and perfect Law.

There is no Disposition towards God which is more essential to true Religion, and on which a greater Stress is laid in the Sacred Writings, than Divine Love. Hence our Saviour, in Answer to the Question that was proposed to him, *Which is the great Commandment in the Law?* makes this remarkable Declaration, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind. This is the first and great Commandment.* Matt. xxii. 37, 38. This Love to God is not to be understood of a mere transient Pang and passionate Warmth
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of Affection, but of the habitual abiding Disposition of the Heart, founded in an inward Sense and Perception of God's infinite Excellency and Amiability in himself, and of his infinite Goodness, Grace; and Mercy towards his Creatures, particularly towards us of the human Race. Where this Love to God is of the right Kind, it hath a mighty attractive Force; whereby we are powerfully drawn to serve and to obey him; and it rendereth the Obedience free and ingenuous. And hence it is declared, that *this is the Love of God that we keep his Commandments; and his Commandments are not grievous.* 1 John v. 3. They are not grievous to a Soul animated with this Divine Principle. It kindleth in the Heart an earnest Desire to please him, and to glorify him in the World; and causeth us to value his Favour and Approbation above all Things. Where this is the reigning Disposition, it will over-rule and controul the corrupt and sensual Affections, and will engage us, for his Sake, to mortify our most beloved Lusts, and to make all the Interests of the Flesh and of the World give Way to the superior Interests of his Kingdom; so that we shall not decline any Services or Sufferings to which we shall be called for the Cause
of

of Truth and Righteousness, which is the Cause of God. It will tend to form us into his Divine Likeness, and will excite in us earnest Aspirations after that State where we hope to be admitted to the immediate transforming Visions of his Glory, and to the full eternal Enjoyment of his Love. And now how happy must it be to act under the Influence of this glorious Principle! Love, when vigorously exercised on the best and noblest Object, in which there is an absolute Confluence of all possible Perfections, is certainly the most delightful Thing in the World, a Source of the purest and most refined Joy. Here our Affections may rise higher and higher to Eternity, and never equal the real Excellency and Amiability of the Object. The Perfection of Divine Love is Heaven itself, and the Beginning of it here on Earth is the Beginning of Heaven and Glory. To command us therefore *to love God with all our Hearts* is in Effect to command us to promote our own highest Felicity, and to cultivate that Disposition, which is the most delightful Temper of our Souls. We should therefore, as we value our own Happiness, do all we can to get our Hearts brought more and more under the Power and Influence of this

Divine Affection. In order to this, let us frequently represent to our Minds the Reasons and Motives we have to love God above all. We should rise in our Thoughts to him as the sovereign original Goodness and Beauty, the Source and Center of all Perfection, who is everlastingly and invariably possessed of all that is great and good, excellent and lovely. This wide Universe all around us shines with the Radiations of his Goodness and Glory. With what Delight should we behold him diffusing the Streams of his Benignity through the whole Creation, communicating Happiness in various Degrees to numberless Orders of Beings, and particularly pouring forth the Blessings of his Providence in a rich Abundance to the human Race! But, above all, we should frequently dwell in our Meditations on *the exceeding Riches of his Grace* as manifested towards us in his well-beloved Son *Jesus Christ* our Lord, and in the wonderful Methods of our Redemption and Salvation through him: For it is here especially that he appeareth in all the Glory of that amiable Character, that *God is Love.*

And,

DISCOURSE VIII. 163

And, as it is required of us that we should love God with a superlative Affection, so also that we should fear him with the profoundest Reverence. It is a Command frequently repeated in the Divine Law, *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God.* Deut. vi. 13. x. 12, 20. Agreeable to this is that Exhortation of the Prophet, *Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your Fear, and let him be your Dread.* II. viii. 13. *Let us have Grace,* saith the Apostle, *whereby we may serve God acceptably with Reverence and godly Fear.* Heb. xii. 28. This is so necessary and of such Importance, that *the Fear of God* is in Scripture-Language frequently put for the Whole of true Religion. This may seem to make an unamiable Representation of it. But it must be considered, that *the Fear of God*, which true Religion tendeth to inspire, is a quite different Thing from that servile Horror, the Effect of Superstition, which ariseth from wrong and unworthy Apprehensions of the Deity, and is a perpetual Source of Uneasiness and Anxiety. The Fear that God requireth is a filial Awe, such a Veneration mixed with Love, as floweth from the highest Esteem of the supreme Being, and a just Sense of his sovereign Dominion and incomparable Perfections. Accordingly it

is represented as the genuine Temper of *the People of God*, that *they fear the Lord and his Goodness*. Hof. iii. 5. It is such a Fear of God as causeth us to dread his Displeasure above all Things, and maketh us careful not to offend him, and desirous to shun every Thing which is contrary to his holy Will and Law. And hence *to fear the Lord, and to depart from Evil*, are represented as inseparably connected, and as in Effect the same Thing. *Job xxviii. 28. The Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom; and to depart from Evil is Understanding* This holy Fear of God hath a natural Tendency to check the Vanity and Levity of the Mind, to repress the tumultuous Motions of the disorderly Appetites and Passions, and to keep every Thing quiet and in good Order within; and consequently it tendeth to produce an inward happy Composure and peaceful Tranquillity. And the great Benefit and Satisfaction arising from this is very evident, especially when it is considered, that, in Proportion as the Soul is under the Influence of a well-regulated Fear of God, it will be raised above the Disturbance of all other Fears. An habitual awful Sense of the Divine Majesty, deeply impressed upon the Heart, will cause a Man to think little comparatively of the Power or Terror of
Creatures

DISCOURSE VIII. 165

Creatures like himself; so that this Part of the Divine Law is also manifestly conducive to our Happiness, and we cannot do a better Thing for ourselves, than to endeavour to get our Souls thoroughly possessed with a reverential Regard to the Lord *Yehovah*. In order to this we should frequently realise him to our Minds in his universal Sovereignty, his immense Greatness, his almighty Power, his boundless Goodness, his impartial Righteousness, and spotless Purity. This glorious Assemblage of Excellencies and Perfections naturally tendeth to strike the Mind with a sacred Awe of God, and represents him as infinitely venerable as well as amiable.

Another Disposition towards God, which is also of great Importance in Religion, is an absolute Submission to his Authority and Resignation to his Will. And this indeed naturally follows from such a superlative Love to God, and reverential Awe of his Divine Majesty, and Fear of offending him, as have been mentioned. That is a very important and comprehensive Precept, *Submit yourselves to God*. Jam. iv. 7. This is to be understood of a willing complacential Submission, not as of Necessity and Compulsion, but from Inclination and Choice; and it must be absolute and intire, without

Exception, Limitation, or Reserve : For absolute Dominion, in Conjunction with infinite Goodness and unlimited Perfection, is most justly intitled to absolute unreserved Submission and Obedience. It ought to be the Language, not merely of our Lips, but of our Hearts, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?* Acts ix. 6. *Here am I, let the Lord do to me as seemeth good unto him.* 2 Sam. xv. 26. *The Will of the Lord be done.* Acts xxi. 14. It should be the Matter of our daily Prayer, that *his Will may be done on Earth, as it is done in Heaven.* We must do what we can that our obstinate Self-will may be subdued, and that our Wills may be wholly regulated and determined by the good and holy Will of God, resolving to make it our sincere and constant Endeavour to walk in Obedience to all his Commands, and to acquiesce in all his Appointments. This is a Temper of Mind highly reasonable, and suited to the Relations between him and us, as he is our Maker and absolute Proprietor, and we are his Creatures, his constant Dependents and Beneficiaries, and the Subjects of his moral Government. And how happy is it to have our Souls thus wrought into a submissive obediential Frame, and our Wills resolved into the Divine ! To resign ourselves to the Conduct of the infinitely perfect Being, and embrace what the supreme

Wisdom

Wisdom and Goodness seeth to be really best and fittest for us!

This leadeth me to add, that we are required in the Divine Law to exercise a firm Trust in God, and a fiducial Dependence upon him. To engage us to this is the Design of those excellent Precepts, *Wait upon the Lord, and he shall strengthen thine Heart; wait, I say, on the Lord.* Ps. xxvii. 14. *Commit thy Way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.* Ps. xxxvii. 5. *Cast thy Burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the Righteous to be moved.* Ps. lv. 22. *Trust in the Lord with all thine Heart, and lean not unto thine own Understanding; in all thy Ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy Paths.* Prov. iii. 5, 6. We are required *not to trust in uncertain Riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all Things to enjoy.* 1 Tim. vi. 17. And to *commit the Keeping of our Souls to him, in Well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.* 1 Pet. iv. 19. And surely the very Mention of these Duties of Religion is sufficient to shew their Reasonableness and Excellency, and the great Advantage and Satisfaction which will arise from the Observation of them. If we were to contrive Laws for our own Benefit, they could not possibly be better

fitted to promote our Happiness. What a Privilege is it to be allowed, and even commanded, *to put our Trust in God, and to cast our Cares upon him*, and, amidst all the Changes and Vicissitudes of this mortal Life, to make the Lord *Jehovah our Stay and our Refuge!* This is the best, the most effectual Remedy against anxious Cares, desponding Fears, and fretting Discontents! Happy those, above the rest of Mankind, who, firmly relying on God's all-sufficient Goodness, and on his most gracious Promises, *commit their Bodies and Souls, their Concernments for the Life that now is, and for that which is to come, into his Hands*, being persuaded that he will order all Things really for the best, and that all his Dispensations are conducted by the steady Rules of infinite Wisdom, Righteousness, and Equity! What inward Peace and Pleasure do such Persons enjoy, what a solid Contentment and Satisfaction of Mind, to which they are Strangers who live in the Neglect of these excellent Precepts! *The Lord God is a Sun and Shield; he will give Grace and Glory; no good Thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord, of Hosts, blessed is the Man that trusteth in thee.* Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 12.

Thus

DISCOURSE VIII. 169

Thus I have considered those Affections and Dispositions towards God, which are necessarily included in *true Godliness*, and in which the Religion of the Heart doth eminently consist. And it plainly appears, that this Part of our Duty is not only perfectly agreeable to right Reason, but is manifestly conducive to our own Happiness, and lays a solid Foundation for an inward Satisfaction and Delight. What further remaineth to be considered, with Respect to *our living godly in this present World*, must be reserved for another Discourse.



On Delighting in the Laws of God.

DISCOURSE IX.

P S A L M cxix. 47.

*I will delight myself in thy Commandments,
which I have loved.*

WE are now considering that Part of the Duty required of us in the Divine Law which immediately relateth to God, and which may in the properest Sense be called *Godliness*. This includeth, as hath been already shewn, our Endeavouring to get our Minds possessed with a strong and lively Persuasion of the Existence, the Perfections, and Providence of God, and with those holy Affections and Dispositions which become reasonable Creatures towards the
supreme

supreme Being ; such as a superlative Love, a profound and filial Reverence, an absolute Submission to his Authority and Resignation to his Will, and an ingenuous steady Trust and Affiance in him.

I now proceed to observe farther, that it is a necessary Part of *true Godliness*, or of the Duty we owe to God, to render him that religious Wordship which is his Due, and to observe those sacred Rites and Ordinances which he hath appointed in his Word. It is an important Part of the Divine Law, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* Matt. iv. 10. This Worshipping of God includeth, as the principal Part of it, an inward Adoration and Devotion : *God is a Spirit*, saith our Saviour, *and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in Truth.* Our Hearts and Affections, and all the Powers of our Souls, must be engaged, when we pay our religious Homage to that most pure and perfect Mind, the Sovereign Lord of the Universe ; and, that we may do this in a proper Manner, we must endeavour to withdraw our Thoughts for a While from our worldly Occupations, Diversions, and Cares, and fix them upon God, realising him to our Minds in his incomparable Majesty, his Greatness, Goodness, and Purity.

And

DISCOURSE IX. 173

And this must be ordinarily accompanied with some outward Signs and Expressions of the inward Devotion of our Hearts: The very Frame of the human Body seems to be peculiarly fitted for this. Man is made with a Countenance erect towards Heaven, and not, like that of other Animals, prone towards the Earth: He hath the Power of bending his Knees, and of raising his Hands in an adoring Posture, and of lifting up his Eyes in a Manner wonderfully expressive of awful Veneration; and by the admirable Faculty of Speech he is capable of uttering, in distinct articulate Sounds, the inward Sentiments and Affections of his Mind. It is proper therefore that, at the same Time that *we worship God in our Spirits*, there should be something correspondent to it in our bodily Gesture and Deportment: *O come let us worship and bow down*, saith the Psalmist, *let us kneel before the Lord our Maker*. Pf. xcvi. 6. But especially we should, on such Occasions, express in Words the devout Sentiments of our Hearts. This is very proper and useful even in our private Devotions, but is absolutely necessary in public and social Acts of Worship. And, as these Acts of Religion have an immediate Relation to the Deity, so we are said, in the Language of Scripture, *to draw near to God*
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in those holy Exercises. We then maintain a sacred Intercourse with him, we set ourselves as in his immediate Presence, and, as far as in us lies, lay our Souls open to his Divine Communications. God doth not require this of us, as if he were to be a Gainer by our Worshipping him: For what Profit or Advantage can the all-sufficient *Jehovah* reap from the religious Services we are capable of offering? But he requireth us to worship him, because it is in the Nature of Things most fit and proper that reasonable Creatures should render this sacred Homage to the supreme Lord of the Universe, and because it is a worthy Employment of the noble Faculties and Powers he hath given us, and tends to the Heightening and Improving pious and excellent Dispositions in our Souls, and consequently to the Promoting the true Happiness and Perfection of our Natures. Surely then every sincere and well-disposed Mind may upon just Grounds say, with the devout Psalmist, *It is good for me to draw near to God.* Ps. lxxiii. 28.

One eminent Part of religious Worship is Prayer, whereby we apply to God for the Blessings we stand in need of, whether spiritual or temporal, relating to our Bodies or to our Souls: And this, in such sinful Crea-
tures

tures as we are, should be accompanied with humble penitent Confessions of our Iniquities, which render us utterly unworthy of his Favour; and with earnest Supplications for his pardoning Grace and Mercy. By Prayer we acknowledge him as the supreme Disposer, the Author and Fountain of all Good, *from whom every good and perfect Gift doth descend.* This is a Duty frequently and expressly required in the Divine Law: It is to be our daily Exercise. Nothing less than this can be understood by that Precept, *Pray without Ceasing.* 1 Thess. v. 17. And, for our Encouragement in this Duty, God is described under this Character, that *he is the Hearer of Prayer.* Pl. lxxv. 2. And it is a marvellous Instance of his Grace and condescending Goodness towards us, and of his earnest Desire of our Happiness, that he is pleased not only to allow, but to invite and even to command us to apply to him by Prayer for whatsoever Things are really good and needful for us. What a gracious Command is that, in *Phil. iv. 6, Be careful, or anxiously solicitous, for Nothing, but in every Thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, let your Requests be made known unto God!* Not as if he did not know what we stand in need of without our Prayers, but

but it is his Will that we should ourselves represent our Wants and Desires before him, and humbly apply to him for Assistance and Relief, in order to the keeping up in our Minds a constant Sense of our Dependence upon God, and to the strengthening of holy and good Affections towards him in our Hearts: And this, when rightly performed, is highly advantageous and delightful. Whilst we solemnly invoke his Divine Majesty, and address ourselves to him by earnest Prayer and Supplication, we feel his sacred and powerful Attractions, we are brought into a nearer Acquaintance with him, and to a more intimate Sensation of his Glory and Excellency, and all-sufficient Goodness. What a mighty Advantage and Comfort is it that, under all our Grievances and Distresses, we have a Liberty of Access to God through *Jesus Christ*, and can *come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, to obtain Mercy, and to find Grace to help us in the Time of Need?* Heb. iv. 16. We can at all Times pour forth our Wants into the Bosom of our most compassionate *heavenly Father*, and *almighty Friend*, who is *more ready to give good Things, and especially his Holy Spirit, to them that sincerely ask him, than earthly Parents are to give good Gifts unto their Children.* Matt. vii. 11. Luke xi. 13. In this
Respect

Respect it may be justly said, that God hath required that of us which we ourselves ought above all Things to have desired; and that what is enjoined in his Law, as our Duty, is really our greatest Privilege. What unhappy Creatures must we have been, if, instead of commanding us to apply to him by Prayer, God had forbidden us to presume to offer up a Petition or Request to him, or to take his sacred Name into our Lips! And yet many there are who, *by restraining Prayer before God*, do in Effect cut themselves off from this inestimable Privilege.

As to the noble Work of Thanksgiving and Praise, which is another excellent Part of religious Worship, it evidently carries Delight in it's very Nature and Exercise: For it is, when rightly performed, the Exercise of Love, Admiration; and Gratitude, that is, of our noblest and most delightful Affections, towards the most excellent of all Objects. What a Divine Joy springeth up in a good Man's Heart, when he calleth upon *his Soul and all that is within him* to adore and bless God's glorious Name, to publish his most worthy Praise, and to celebrate his peerless Perfections and many marvellous Benefits! Whilst he is thus engaged, giving Vent to his best Affections, and

offering up the grateful Tribute of a devout Mind, he mingleth as it were with the blessed Seraphims, and entereth upon their Employments and their Joys, and can look down with a generous Contempt upon all the low muddy Delights of Sense and this vain World. Justly therefore doth the Psalmist declare, that *it is good to sing Praises unto our God; for it is pleasant, and Praise is comely.* Pf. cxlvii. 1. And again Pf. cxxxv. 3. *Praise ye the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing Praises unto his Name, for it is pleasant.*

I add, that the religious Worship, which the Divine Law requireth, doth also include a diligent Attendance on those sacred Ordinances which God hath appointed in his Word. It is certainly a great Advantage that we have religious Rites prescribed to us by God himself to be used in his Worship, and a due Observance of them, instead of being an uneasy Burden upon us, doth really contribute to our Satisfaction and Joy. This is particularly true of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the principal standing Ordinance of the *New Testament*, and which *Christ's* faithful Disciples are obliged frequently to celebrate. What can have a happier Influence to fill the Heart of a sincere *Christian* with Consolation and Joy, than

than frequently to commemorate our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and the great Things he hath done and suffered for our Salvation ! To be allowed and invited to *celebrate a holy Feast* over the affecting Memorials of the Redeemer's Sacrifice, and to solemnise a sacred Covenant with God through his well-beloved Son; *who loved us, and gave himself for us !* Among the primitive *Christians*, this Sacrament was wont to be called *the Eucharist*, i. e. *Thanksgiving*, for so the Word signifies; because joyful Thanksgiving and Praise is there our proper Work. How great then are our Obligations to the Goodness of God, that he hath been graciously pleased to institute such an Ordinance as this for strengthening our Faith, and confirming our pious Resolutions, and heightening our Joys in this Pilgrimage-state ! And what Enemies are they to their own Comfort who live in the habitual Neglect of it ?

Upon this brief View of the principal Parts of Divine Worship, I think it may be justly affirmed, that the religious Service of the *Lord's-Day* is to a well-disposed Mind a delightful Employment. It is far from being a Hardship to be obliged to set apart one Day in Seven for God's more immediate Worship and Service : And those certainly

betray a depraved Temper of Mind who find Fault with Religion and the Divine Love on this Account. If the stated Returns of this sacred Day were more frequent, there might be some Pretence for complaining, that it prejudiced our worldly Affairs, and that we were abridged of the Time necessary for our Business, or for our Recreations ; if the Returns were more rare, we should run a great Hazard of losing the Relish of spiritual Things, and of being absolutely immerfed in the Pleasures and Cares of this present World : But, by requiring us to lay aside our worldly Employments, and apply ourselves to the immediate Exercises of Religion, one Day in a Week, God hath wisely and mercifully provided for the Ease and Refreshment of our Bodies, and for the Improvement of our Minds. And, if we make a right Use of our Opportunities, we shall find that they are the most delightful Seasons we enjoy here on Earth, and which tend greatly to strengthen and enlarge good Affections and Dispositions in our Souls, and to form us into a Meetness for the Work and for the Joys of Heaven. Justly therefore is *the Sabbath* called a *Delight, the Holy of the Lord, and honourable*. II. lviii. 13. The best of Men in all Ages have set a high Value upon the Ordinances of
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of Religion, and the Exercises of Divine Worship; and have expressed great Satisfaction in them. This is what the devout Psalmist frequently signifies in the most emphatical Expressions: *One Thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the House of the Lord for ever, to behold the Beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his Temple.* Pf. xxvii. 4. *Send forth thy Light and thy Truth; let them lead me, let them bring me near to thy holy Hill, and to thy Tabernacles; then will I approach to the Altar of God, to God my exceeding Joy.* Pf. xliii. 3, 4. The xliid and lxiiid Psalms are particularly remarkable to this Purpose; and it is the intire Subject of the lxxxivth: *How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! — My Soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the Courts of the Lord; my Heart and my Flesh crieth out for the living God. — One Day in thy Courts is better than a Thousand; I had rather be a Door-keeper in the House of my God, than to dwell in the Tents of Wickedness.* Pf. lxxxiv. 1, 2, 10. And, if good Men under the Old Testament found such Delight in drawing near to God in the Ordinances of his House, and in the Solemnity of his Worship, how much more should we do so under the most perfect Dispensation of the Gospel, in which we have most glorious

Manifestations of the Divine Grace and Goodness, and the Ordinances of which are more free and spiritual, and more fitted to produce a sacred Joy! Some will be ready to brand all this with the contemptuous Name of *Entbusiasm*; for which I can see no Reason, except they be resolved to call the noblest Elevations of the Heart and Affections towards the most excellent Objects by that Name. But they, who have had Experience of those Divine Joys, will not suffer themselves to be bantered out of their own Feelings by those who *speak Evil of the Things they understand not*; nor would they exchange the pure Delights of Communion with God in the Ordinances of his Worship for all the boasted Pleasures of the voluptuous Sensualist. And, if the Generality of professed *Christians* do not find so much Delight in religious Duties, and in attending on Divine Ordinances, as might be expected, it is because they are apt to take up with a mere spiritless *Form of Godliness*, and with the mere outward Performance of sacred Exercises; and do not take Pains to stir up good Affections in their Hearts, and to maintain that Divine Temper of Soul which should animate all our Devotions.

But it is proper to observe farther, Thirdly, That *true Godliness*, or the Practice of the
Duty

Duty we owe to God, not only includes our rendering him that Worship which is due, but our endeavouring to imitate him in his amiable moral Excellencies, as far as we are capable of doing so. God hath been pleased, in his marvellous Goodness and Condescension, to honour us so far as to propose himself to us in his holy Word, as the great Exemplar and Pattern to which we must labour to be conformed: It is his express Command, *Be ye holy, for I am holy.* Levit. xix. 2. 1 Pet. i. 16. To the same Purpose is that Injunction in *Eph. v. 1.* *Be ye Followers* (or, as it might be more properly rendered, *Imitators*) *of God, as dear Children.* Our Saviour signifieth the same Thing in a very strong and emphatical Manner of Expression, when he saith, *Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.* Matt. v. 48. This cannot be understood as if we were capable of attaining to an equal Degree of Perfection with God himself, which it were absurd and impious to imagine; but the Meaning is, that we should make it our earnest Desire and continual Endeavour to resemble him more and more in his imitable moral Perfections; for it is evident, that it is to God's moral Perfections that our Saviour there refers, and especially to his beneficent Love and Goodness.

We must do what we can, as reasonable and moral Agents, to get his amiable Perfections copied out upon our own Souls. Man, in his primitive State of Rectitude, is represented as *having been made after the Image of God*, which is not said of any of the inferior Creatures: And it is the great Design of *Christianity* to engage us to *put on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness*. Eph. iv. 24. True *Christians* are said to be *made Partakers of the Divine Nature*. 2 Pet. i. 4. And surely this sets our Duty in a noble and engaging Light. What a happy, as well as honourable, Thing must it be to aspire to be like God, the great Original of all Perfection and Excellence; and like his well-beloved Son, in Purity and Holiness, in Goodness and universal Benevolence, in Righteousness and Equity, in Faithfulness and Truth! Like him in an invariable Love of what is morally good and excellent, and in a steady Abhorrence of all Injustice and Impurity, Falseness and Deceit! He requireth us thus to endeavour after a Conformity to him here on Earth, that we may be fitted for a Participation of his Felicity and Glory in the heavenly State, where *we shall behold his Face in Righteousness, and shall be perfectly satisfied with his Likeness*.

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DISCOURSE IX. 185

The last Thing I shall mention, with Respect to the Duty we owe to God, is, that we should be careful to maintain a constant habitual Regard to him in our whole Course, having an Eye to his Providence in the Events which befall us, and doing what we do as in his Sight, and in a Subordination to his Glory. The Command which was given by God to *Abraham, the Father of the Faithful*, is really of universal Obligation: *I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.* Gen. xvii. 1. Where it is intimated, that *to walk as before God*, and under a constant Sense of his Presence, is the surest Way to Perfection, as far as we are capable of attaining to it here on Earth. It is an express and comprehensive Injunction, *Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.* 1. Cor. x. 31. The governing End we must have in View in every Part of our Conduct should be, not the Gratifying our own fleshly Appetites, or the Promoting our worldly Interests, or the Procuring to ourselves the Applause of Men; but the Pleasing and Honouring God, and *Finishing the Work which he*, our supreme and rightful Lord, *both given us to do.* This will render our Practice consistent and uniform, and will spread a
Beauty

Beauty and Harmony through the Whole; Thus to live as unto God and for God; to act daily as in his Presence, and with a Regard to his Approbation; is certainly the most excellent and comfortable Life in the World. Happy those who, having their Hearts habitually impressed with a Sense of a present Deity, of his sovereign Authority and incomparable Perfections, *walk as before the Lord in the Land of the Living!* They carry about with them the most effectual Preservative against every Temptation, and the most powerful Engagement to every Duty. This hath a Tendency to keep them steady amidst the many Fluctuations of this uncertain World: They set the Word of God before them as their Rule, and in their Designs and Undertakings have a Sense of their continual Dependence upon his Providence. In their Prosperity they consider him as the glorious Author of all the Advantages they enjoy, and to his Blessing ascribe the Success of their honest Endeavours: In the Adversities and Afflictions they meet with, they reverence his Hand, being satisfied that they are all ordered and permitted by him for wise and righteous Ends. Thus a Regard to God governeth them in their general Course: And in this View *true Godliness* may

DISCOURSE IX. 187

may be said to comprehend the Whole of a virtuous Practice, and spreadeth it's Influence through every Part of our Duty, even that which more immediately relateth to our Fellow-creatures, or to ourselves. With what Satisfaction many good Men engage in the Business of their several Callings, Stations, and Employments, and in the Performance of the Duties incumbent upon them in their civil and social Capacities, when they do them as in Obedience to the Will of God, and with a Reference to his Glory as the supreme End, sensible that this is a Part of the Work which he requireth of them in this State of Trial! Thus even their worldly Employments are sanctified, and become a Part of Religion; their Life may be said to be *a Serving God*: and they find an inward Satisfaction resulting from a Consciousness of the Divine Approbation, which those who *live as without God in the World* are Strangers to.

I would conclude this Discourse with observing, that, in our religious Transactions with the Deity, we must have a constant Regard to our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the Mediator. It is an important Doctrine of the Gospel, that, as *there is one God, so there is one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus*, as St. Paul expresseth it, *1 Tim. ii.*

5. And this is not a mere Point of Speculation, but must have a suitable Influence on the Practice. Through this great and only Mediator we are required to offer up our spiritual Sacrifices of Prayer and Praise. Through him we are to apply for the Pardon of our Sins, and for the Influences and Aids of the Holy Spirit. In him we are to hope for the Acceptance of our Persons and Services, exercising a constant Reliance on his Mediation, and Intercession, and saving Power. We must live the *Life we live in the Flesh by the Faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us*; and are expressly commanded, *whatsoever we do in Word or Deed, to do all in the Name of Jesus Christ, giving Thanks unto God and the Father by him.* Col. iii. 17. And this is so far from being an Hardship upon us, that it is our greatest Privilege. God, by obliging us to have a continual Regard to the Mediator, hath manifestly consulted our Satisfaction and Advantage. He hath not only provided for dispensing his Benefits in such a Manner as is best suited to the Honour of his Government and illustrious moral Excellencies, but hath taken the most effectual Method to remove the Fears and Jealousies of our guilty Minds, and to inspire us with an ingenuous Assurance
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DISCOURSE IX. 189

in his Grace and Mercy. How happy is it to maintain Communion with *the God and Father of all through the Son of his Love, in whom he is always well pleased!* To be daily looking unto *Jesus* who is able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by him, to have his bright Example ever in View as our great Pattern, to feel the sacred Constraints of his wonderous Love, and to apply to him for Grace and Strength *in whom it hath pleased the Father that all Fullness should dwell!* And, finally, to put ourselves under his gracious Conduct and Government, who is constituted *the Head over all Things to his Church;* and to look forwards by Faith and Hope to his glorious Appearing, *when he shall come to be glorified in his Saints, and admired in all them that believe,* and shall put the finishing Hand to the great Work of our Salvation! What a comfortable Life is this! And how great is the Goodness of God in requiring these Things of us!

Thus have I endeavoured to explain the true Nature and Extent of our Duty in the Relation it bears to God, and on the Account of which it may in the properest Sense be called *Piety* or *Godliness*. And I have insisted the more largely upon this, because it is what many Persons seem to have

190 DISCOURSE IX.

have a strong Prejudice against. But, from the Account which hath been given of it; the Duty required of us in the Divine Law; considered in this View, appears to be most reasonable and excellent, and is a Source of Divine Joy and Comfort. No Persons have so much real Satisfaction and Enjoyment as they who, not in outward Appearance only, but, *in Sincerity and Truth, live godly in this present World*: And they that neglect to do so are not only deficient in the noblest Part of their Duty, and act in a Manner unbecoming reasonable Creatures, the Subjects of God's moral Government; but are in Effect Enemies to their own true Peace and Happiness.



On Delighting in the Laws of God.

DISCOURSE X.

PSALM cxix. 47.

*I will delight myself in thy Commandments,
which I have loved.*

HAVING considered the Duty we more immediately owe to God, and which cometh properly under the Notion of *Piety* or *Godliness*; and shewn, that it is really conducive to our own Satisfaction and Happiness; let us, next, proceed to the Duties required of us in the Divine Law towards our Fellow-creatures, which, as well as the former, are essential to true Religion, and necessarily included in a holy and virtuous Practice.

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If we attend to the Frame of our Nature; we shall easily be convinced, that the Author of our Beings designed us for mutual Assistance and Benevolence. We are, in the original Principles of our Constitution; sociable Creatures, *i. e.* fitted for the Offices, the Duties, the Enjoyments of Society. The Happiness of our Fellow-creatures, when our Minds are not distorted by Envy, or under the Influence of disorderly Passions, exhilarates and gives us Pleasure. And our own Joys are enlarged and heightened by Communicating, and would in a great Measure lose their Relish in Solitude: And, on the other Hand, the Miseries of others, their Tears, their Groans, their Sorrows, naturally affect and move us, and tend to produce correspondent Feelings in our own Breasts. To which it may be added, that Men alone, of all the Creatures in this lower World, are endued with the Faculty of Speech, whereby they are capable of social Intercourse; of communicating to one another their Counsels and Designs, their Knowledge and Experience; of contributing towards each other's Improvement, and of promoting each other's Interests. It strengtheneth this, when it is considered, that God in his wise Providence hath placed us in such Circumstances here on Earth, that we really stand in Need one of another. We
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are cast upon the Care of others, when we first come into the World; and ever afterwards need the Assistances, the kind Offices, and friendly Affections of our Fellow-creatures, for obtaining and enjoying the Necessaries and Conveniences of human Life. This is true of all without Exception, from the King to the Peasant, from the highest to the meanest of the human Race. The Rich and Great need the Labours and Services of the Poor, as the Poor need to be assisted by the Wealth and Bounty of the Rich. We are under a Necessity therefore of entering into Society, to which also we are carried by a natural Inclination; and in such a Temper and Behaviour as tendeth to mutual Satisfaction and Advantage, and to promote the general Good, all social Virtue doth consist. As far as we are deficient in this, we are wanting to the original Intention and Constitution of our Being, and to the Design of Providence in placing us here on Earth. And accordingly no small Part of the Divine Law relateth to social Duties, and the Offices incumbent upon us towards our Fellow-creatures. These are of great Extent: But they may be reduced to two principal Heads, *Justice* and *Charity*; both which are signified in that remarkable Passage of the Prophet *Micah*, which sets

before us an excellent Summary of our Duty : *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?* Micah vi. 8. The last Part of the Words particularly relates to the Duty we more immediately owe to God, which hath been already considered. Our Duty towards Man is here distributed into two main Branches, *the Doing justly, and the Loving Mercy.*

It is the first of these that I shall now consider : *The Lord requireth of us to do justly,* i. e. that we should do no Man any Wrong, but should, as far as in us lies, do that which is just and right to all Men. This is the Design of that comprehensive Precept in *Rom. xiii. 7. Render to all their Dues.* We must endeavour to preserve to every Man his just Rights, and not allow ourselves to do any Thing which tends to deprive him of those Rights, or to injure him in them ; for, as far as we do so, we act *unjustly* by him. That admirable Maxim of our Saviour placeth this in a fair and obvious Light : *All Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so to them ; for this is the Law and the Prophets.* Matt. vii. 12. We are generally quick-sighted enough in discerning our own Rights. We readily
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see what is due to us from others, or what it is reasonable and fit that they should do unto us. It will therefore help to set us right in our Conduct towards them to put ourselves in their Place, and make their Case our own; and, whatsoever we are upon cool Reflection satisfied, that it would be *just* and *right* for others to do to us, we must look upon it to be equally *just* and *right* that we should do so to them in the like Circumstances. This is what Reason plainly requires: And an excellent Rule it is, which, if duly attended to, would be of great Use to direct us to a *just* and *equitable* Behaviour towards all with whom we have to do.

But it will be proper to consider this Matter more distinctly. Rights there are of various Kinds; natural and civil Rights, and Rights resulting from particular Stations and Relations, Conditions and Circumstances. And *Justice* requireth, that we should be careful, in our Dealings with others, not to infringe any of their Rights, nor to with-hold from them what on any of these Accounts is *justly* due to them.

First, There are what may be called natural Rights, Rights belonging to Men as Men, and which do not merely arise from arbitrary civil Constitutions, or particular

Compacts. Of this Kind is the Right of private Judgment in Matters of Religion and Conscience : For, as the Salvation of the Soul and eternal Happiness is of far greater Consequence to every Man than any temporal Interests whatsoever, so the greatest and most valuable of all his Rights is that of taking Care of his Soul, and doing what is necessary for his Salvation ; and to abridge him of this Right is to do him the greatest Injury. As every Man must give an Account of himself to God, and not merely another for him ; so every Man must judge for himself in Matters of Religion, according to the Reason which God hath given him, and in a careful Improvement of those Helps that are afforded him, and which he is obliged not to neglect : For a Man's Judging for himself is not to be understood of a confident Presumption, and Self-sufficiency, as if he were to be left to his own Guidance, and stood in no Need of Instruction or Assistance. It is his Wisdom and Duty to make Use of the best Instructions and Informations he can procure, otherwise his Ignorance, or Error, will be highly culpable. But, when he hath taken the properest Methods in his Power to get his Conscience well informed, he hath a Right to serve and worship God in that Way
which

which appears to him to be most agreeable to the Divine Will, and to the Light of his holy Word ; and consequently he hath a Right not to be compelled to profess that to be true which he believes to be false, or to practise that which his own Mind and Conscience disapproves and condemns as sinful. We are required to *prove* or *try all Things* ; and to *hold fast that which is good*, i. e. that which appears to us, upon a careful and impartial Examination, to be good and true. 1 *Thess.* v. 21. It is a standing Rule in religious Matters, *Let every Man be fully persuaded in his own Mind.* Rom. xiv. 5. And therefore he ought not to be constrained by Force to act contrary to that Persuasion. The greatest Infringement of that Right is open Persecution, when, on the Account of Opinions and Practices which do not disturb the civil Peace and Order of the Community, violent compulsory Methods are made Use of by bodily Pains or Imprisonment, or by threatening Men with the Deprivation of worldly Substance, or even of Life itself, to hinder them from acting according to the Dictates of their Consciences, or to force them to act contrary to those Dictates, i. e. to force them to sin ; for he that acteth against his Conscience sinneth : And, where it is not carried

ried so far, yet, if we revile and calumniate others for their religious Sentiments, we act an *unjust* Part towards them. We may indeed, upon the most mature and impartial Inquiry, think them to be in an Error, and in an Error which appears to us to be of a dangerous Tendency; and in that Case it is both lawful and a Duty to endeavour to reclaim them *in a Spirit of Meekness*, and by Reason and Scripture to convince them of it, and to guard others against it. But we must not, merely on Account of their Opinions, however mistaken, when they appear otherwise to be Persons truly conscientious and of real Piety and Virtue, take upon us peremptorily to judge of their State with regard to the Favour of God and eternal Salvation. Such rash Judgments are expressly forbidden in the Divine Law: *There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who art thou that judgest another?* Jam. iv. 12. *Why dost thou judge thy Brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy Brother? For we shall all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ.* Rom. xiv. 4, 10. *Judge not, saith our Saviour, that ye be not judged: For, with what Judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and, with what Measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.* Matt. vii. 1, 2. Every Man is sensible of the

the Right of Conscience in his own Case, and of the *Injustice* of Persecution, Reproach, and rash Judgments, when it comes to his own Turn to suffer on the Account of Religion: And certainly it is but *just* and *equal* that we should allow to others the same Claims and Liberty of Conscience which we think ought to be allowed to ourselves.

Another of our natural Rights relates to our Lives and the Safety of our Persons. Every Man hath a natural Right to his own Life, except he hath done something to forfeit it, or except the public Good and the Interest of the Community require him to hazard or give it up; and consequently he hath a Right, and is obliged, to maintain and preserve his own Life by all fit and proper Means in his Power. And one of the greatest Acts of *Injustice* that can be done by one Man to another is to deprive him, without a lawful Cause, of his Life; and in Proportion to do any Thing which tendeth thereunto, to assault his Person, to wound or hurt him, or to put him upon any Thing that hath a Tendency to destroy or impair his Health, or to deprive him of his Livelihood, and the Means of his Subsistence. It is an express Command of the Decalogue, *Thou shalt not kill*. And this is

designed to forbid not only the gross Act of Murder, but all unlawful Acts of Violence offered to the Persons of others. And our Saviour, the authentic Interpreter of the Divine Law, extends it so far as to forbid and condemn *the being angry with our Brother without a Cause*. Matt. v. 21, 22. We are expressly commanded *to put away from us all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger and all Malice*. Eph. iv. 31. On the contrary, we are obliged to do what we can to preserve the Lives of others, as we would have others be ready to assist in preserving ours; to protect their Persons, as far as is in our Power; and to contribute to their Health and Safety.

Another natural Right relateth to our Properties and Possessions. Every Man hath a *just* Right to the Fruit of his own Labour and Industry, and to be undisturbed in the Possession and Use of those Goods and Enjoyments which are become his by honest and lawful Means: And all Attempts to deprive him of them by Fraud or Force, and without the Command of lawful Authority, are *unjust*. To this the eighth Commandment of the Decalogue refers, *Thou shalt not steal*; which is not only intended to forbid Robbery and Theft, but all Defrauding and Over-reaching of our Neigh-

Neighbour in Bargains or Matters of Commerce, and all Extortion and Oppression of him by taking Advantage of his Ignorance or Necessities. Many are the Precepts to this Purpose in the holy Scriptures: *Ye shall not oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God.* Levit. xxv. 17. *Thou shalt not defraud thy Neighbour, neither rob him; the Wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all Night until the Morning.* Lev. xix. 11, 13. *Ye shall do no Unrighteousness in Judgment, in Mete-yard, in Weight, or in Measure.* Ibid. Ver. 35. *Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his Hands the Thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.* Eph. iv. 28. The Divine Law forbiddeth even all inordinate Desires after any Thing which belongeth to others. Remarkable to this Purpose is the tenth Commandment, *Thou shalt not covet thy Neighbour's House, thou shalt not covet thy Neighbour's Wife, nor his Man-servant, nor his Maid-servant, nor his Ox, nor his Ass, nor any Thing that is thy Neighbour's.* We must be so far from actually injuring others in wrongfully depriving them of any of their Possessions and Enjoyments, that we must not indulge any Thought or Inclination in our Hearts tending that Way. On the Contrary, we should

should be ready, as we have Opportunity, to assist them in Preserving their Properties and valuable Interests, and should, instead of Grudging and Hindering, be forward to promote their lawful Gain, allowing them all reasonable Advantages, as we would have others in the like Case to allow to us.

Our natural Rights also extend to the Preserving of our Reputation or good Name. This is a most valuable Blessing which greatly contributes to inable a Man to go through Life with Comfort to himself, and Usefulness to others. The wise Man declares, that *a good Name is rather to be chosen than great Riches.* Prov. xxii. 1. And therefore the Injuring a Man in this is at least as great an *Injustice* as the Wronging him in his Property. Every Man hath a Right to have his Reputation unblemished, till he has done something to bring a Stain upon it; and therefore to defame him, to say or do any Thing which tends to detract from his Reputation without *just* Grounds, or needlessly to expose him by open Calumny, or secret Whisperings or Backbitings, or to endeavour to lessen his Estimation by Ridicule, is doing him great Wrong, and is wounding him in a very sensible Part. This we all easily perceive

ceive in our own Case: And surely it is fit, that we should be especially careful of the Reputation of others, as we would have others be of ours; and that we should not do any Thing causelessly to hurt or impair it. This seems to be one Thing intended in the ninth Commandment, *Thou shalt not bear false Witness against thy Neighbour.* And again it is said, *Thou shalt not go up and down as a Tale-bearer among thy People.* Lev. xix. 16. *Speak not Evil one of another, Brethren. He that speaketh Evil of his Brother, and judgeth his Brother, speaketh Evil of the Law, and judgeth the Law.* Jam. iv. 11. And it is given as the Character of the Man *who shall abide in the Tabernacle of God, and dwell in his holy Hill, that he back-biteth not with his Tongue, nor doeth Evil to his Neighbour, nor taketh up a Reproach against his Neighbour.* Ps. xv. 3.

This leads me to add, That, among those Rights which are naturally due from others to us, and from us to others, may be also reckoned Truth which Men owe to one another, both in their Words and in their Actions. Every Man thinks he has a Right to expect from another that he should speak Truth to him, this being the proper End and Use of Speech; and a Lye has generally,

rally, in all Ages and Nations, been accounted a base Thing. For a Man to promise that which he intends not to perform, or, if he then intends it, to break it afterwards, when it is in his Power to perform it, is looked upon to be a Breach of the Rules of *Justice*; and a Man that is thus treated by another thinks he has a Right to complain that he is not fairly or *justly* dealt with. And it is certainly equally fit that he should himself speak Truth, and fulfil his Promises and Engagements to another Man, as that another should do so to him. Truth should shew itself, not only in our Words to each other, but in our Actions and whole Deportment. This lies at the Foundation of all Fidelity, and of that mutual Credit and Confidence, which is one of the strongest Cements of Society. And accordingly it is frequently insisted upon in the Word and Law of God: *Whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest or venerable, whatsoever Things are just — think on these Things, i. e. so as to practise them. Phil. iv. 8. Ye shall not deal falsely, neither lye one to another. Lev. xix. 11. Putting away Lying, speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour; for we are Members one of another. Eph. iv. 25.* And in the Description before referred

to, it is mentioned as a necessary Part of a righteous Man's Character, that *he speaketh the Truth in his Heart, and that he sweareth to his own Hurt, and changeth not.* Pl. xv. 2, 4. He is true and faithful to his Engagements, even where the Keeping of them may seem to turn to his own Loss and Damage.

Finally, all Men have a natural Right to be treated with Humanity, Kindness, and Decency, as being Partakers of the same common human Nature. This may be regarded as that which is *justly* due from all to all, and which hath it's Foundation in the natural Equality that is among all Men, considered as Men, all of the same Species, and originally of the same Stock and Family. Whatsoever Difference there may be between some of the human Race and others in their outward Stations and Circumstances, for preserving that Subordination which is so useful and necessary in Society, they should never forget this. Men should be treated by us as *of one Blood* with ourselves, having Bodies alike framed and constituted, and Souls endued with the same natural Faculties and Powers; and therefore not with haughty Contempt and Disdain, with Harshness and Rigour, except

cept where their Conduct makes such Usage of them necessary. Accordingly the Scripture teacheth us *to honour all Men.* 1 Pet. ii. 17. And *to be gentle, shewing all Meekness unto all Men.* Tit. iii. 2. And *Gentleness* is reckoned among *the Fruits of the Spirit.* Gal. v. 22. There is such a Respect due to all Men as Men, that we must not wilfully and causelessly affront or offend any Man. To this Purpose are those Precepts: *Give none Offence, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles.* 1 Cor. x. 32. *Provide Things honest in the Sight of all Men.* And, *If it be possible, and as much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all Men.* Rom. xii. 17, 18.

The Rights that have been mentioned may be said to be natural and fundamental Rights, in the Preservation of which *Justice* doth eminently consist: And it appears that great Care has been taken in the Divine Law, as delivered in the holy Scriptures, to oblige Men, in their Conduct towards one another, to shew an uniform Regard to all these.

There are also civil Rights arising from the Laws and Constitutions of the Community to which we belong, and Rights that result from particular Stations and Relations,

DISCOURSE X. 207

iations, Conditions and Circumstances; to which we are obliged to have a due Regard if we would maintain the Character of *just* and *righteous* Persons: And these I propose to consider in my next Discourse.



On Delighting in the Laws of God.

DISCOURSE XI.

P S A L M cxix. 47.

*I will delight myself in thy Commandments,
which I have loved.*

GOD, who is the wise and righteous Governor of the World, hath taken great Care, in his holy Law, to oblige Men to deal *justly* towards one another, *i. e.* that they should endeavour to *render unto all their Dues*, and not do any Thing that tends to deprive any Man of his Rights, or to injure him in them.

These Rights are of various Kinds. There are what may be called natural and fundamental Rights, or Rights belonging
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to Men as Men, and which do not depend merely on civil Constitutions and Compacts: Some Account of these was given in my last Discourse.

I now proceed to observe, Secondly, That there are civil Rights arising from the Laws and Constitutions of the Community or civil Government to which they are subject, or from particular Covenants, Stipulations, and Agreements: And these, as far as they are *just*, have a near Connection with the natural and fundamental Rights which have been mentioned. The proper Design of civil Government is to secure to Men their *just* Rights, to protect their Persons, their Properties, and Reputations, from the Attempts of Fraud, Malice, and Violence; and to hinder them, as far as possible, from wronging and injuring one another. For this Purpose, there are in all civilised Countries Laws and Constitutions established, in order to the Ascertaining and Determining particular Rights conformably to the general Rules of *Justice*. The Forms and Regulations fixed upon may vary in different Communities, but the general Intention of them is the same. And it is fit and proper that those Laws and Constitutions, those Rules and Forms, should be observed
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DISCOURSE XI. 211

and submitted to by the Members of such Communities : For, by subjecting themselves to civil Government, and enjoying it's Protection, they come under an Obligation, and in Effect enter into a Compact; to observe the Laws and Orders, which the Wisdom and Authority of the State hath thought fit to appoint, for adjusting and regulating Men's respective Rights, Claims, and Privileges. And, as it is the Will and Appointment of God that there should be Government and Magistracy for the Preservation of public Order, it may be justly said, that the Divine Law, instead of weakening and vacating, strengtheneth and confirmeth the Obligation of such lawful civil Constitutions ; and therefore it would be *unjust* to endeavour to deprive any Man of those Rights, Privileges, or Emoluments, which, by virtue of such civil Constitutions, are fairly due to him. But then it must be considered, that civil Laws are not adequate Rules of Right, nor must we flatter ourselves that we always *do justly*, when we act up to the Letter of those Laws. A Man may, in some Cases, by rigorously exacting what, by virtue of the civil Laws and Constitutions, he may be said to have a legal Title to, act a very harsh and cruel Part, con-

trary to the general Rules, not only of Charity and Mercy, but even of *Justice* too. And it cannot be denied, that there have been many Instances of Persons who have taken Advantage of the Letter of civil Laws, in Opposition to the true Intention of them, to harrass and oppress their honest Neighbours. We must therefore so regard civil Laws and Rights, as still to have in View that superior Rule of Duty, which obligeth us to deal kindly and equitably with all Men, *to love our Neighbours as ourselves, and to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us.*

But, Thirdly, There are Rights resulting from particular Stations and Relations, Conditions and Circumstances. It is evident that there is a great Variety in Men's outward Conditions in the World, and in the Relations they sustain, and the Stations and Offices they fill in the Society, each of which have their respective Rights and Dues belonging to them. And in the regular Discharge of these relative Duties no small Part of a *just and righteous* Conduct doth consist: I shall therefore distinctly mention some of those Relations, and the Duties and Rights appertaining to them.

The principal and most eminent is that between Magistrates, or the governing Powers

Powers of a Community, and their Subjects. Rulers and Magistrates, supreme and subordinate, in their several Stations, are *justly* intitled to our Submission and dutiful Respect: They have a Right to have their lawful Commands obeyed, and their Dignity and Authority supported; And accordingly this is provided for in the Divine Law. Remarkable to this Purpose is that Passage of the Apostle *Paul*: *Let every Soul be subject to the higher Powers; for the Powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the Power, resisteth the Ordinance of God:— Ye must needs be subject, not only for Wrath, but for Conscience-sake.* Rom. xiii. 1, 2, 5. *Submit yourselves* saith *St. Peter*, *to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake; whether it be the King as supreme, or unto Governors as unto them that are sent by him for the Punishment of Evil-doers, and for the Praise of them that do well.* 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. To preserve the Respect due to Magistracy and the civil Authority is the Design of that Precept, *Thou shalt not speak Evil of the Ruler of thy People.* Exod. xxii. 28. Act. xxiii. 5. As we are commanded in general *to render unto all their Dues*, so, particularly, *Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Custom to whom Custom.*

Rom. xiii. 7. And our Saviour requires us *to render unto Cæsar the Things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the Things that are God's.* Matt. xxii. 21. On the other Hand the Subjects have a Right to be governed with *Equity*, and to be protected and secured by the ruling Powers in their valuable Privileges, Possessions, and Enjoyments, against *unjust* Oppression, Violence and Fraud; since this is the very End for which civil Government was appointed. It is declared, that *the higher Powers are ordained of God* for this Purpose, that they should be a *Terror, not to good Works, but to the Evil*; and that they are the *Ministers of God for Good to him that doeth Good, and Revengers to execute Wrath upon him that doeth Evil.* Rom. xiii. 3, 4. *He that ruleth over Men must be just, ruling in the Fear of God.* 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. It is the Command of God in the Divine Law to Rulers and Magistrates, *Ye shall do no Unrighteousness in Judgment. Thou shalt not respect the Person of the Poor, or honour the Person of the Mighty; but in Righteousness shalt thou judge thy Neighbour.* Lev. xix. 15. or, as it is expressed in Deut. i. 17, *Ye shall not respect Persons in Judgment, but you shall hear the Small as well as the Great; you shall not be afraid*

afraid of the Fear of Man; for the Judgment is God's. And it is given as the Character of a good Prince, that *he shall judge the Poor of the People, he shall save the Children of the Needy, and shall break in Pieces the Oppressor.* Pf. lxxii. 4.

There are also Rights resulting from the Relations between Husbands and Wives, Parents and Children, Masters and Servants; and God hath obliged us in his Word and Law to act suitably to those Rights, and to render what is respectively due in these several Relations.

They that are entered into the conjugal Relation are under special Obligations to treat one another with a mutual Tenderness and Complacency, to endeavour to promote their common Interest and Happiness, and to shun whatsoever hath a Tendency to break the Union and Harmony which should subsist between them; and, as far as they act contrary to this, they act *unjustly*, and in a Manner not suitable to the Obligations of the Marriage-Covenant. Particularly it is required of *Husbands that they should love their Wives, and not be bitter against them.* Col. iii. 19. That Passage of the Apostle Paul sets this Duty of *Husbands* in a very strong and affecting Light: *Husbands, love your Wives, even*

as Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it.—So ought Men to love their Wives, as their own Bodies; he that loveth his Wife loveth himself: For no Man ever yet hated his own Flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church. Eph. v. 25, 28, 29. The Husband is declared to be the Head of the Wife. Eph. v. 23. And, as such, is represented as having Authority; but then he should exercise it with great Gentleness and the tenderest Affection; which is admirably expressed by St. Peter, 1 Pet. iii. 7. *Ye Husbands, dwell with them (i. e. with your Wives) according to Knowledge, giving Honour to the Wife, as to the weaker Vessel, and as being Heirs together of the Grace of Life, that your Prayers be not hindered.* On the other Hand it is required of Wives, that they should submit themselves unto their own Husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Col. iii. 18. Eph. v. 22. And that they should not usurp Authority over them. 1 Tim. ii. 12. That they should love their Husbands, and be discreet, chaste, keepers at Home, good, obedient to their own Husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed. Tit. ii. 4, 5. And it is declared, that the Wife hath not Power of her own Body, but the Husband; and likewise

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also the Husband hath not Power of his own Body, but the Wife. 1 Cor .vii. 4.

With regard to the parental and filial Relation, *Parents* are obliged to treat their *Children* in a tender and affectionate Manner, and to exercise a proper Discipline over them, but not too harsh and rigorous; and to take due Care of their Education and Instruction. This is the Intention of those Precepts: *Train up a Child in the Way he should go; and, when he is old, he will not depart from it.* Prov. xxii. 6. *Ye Fathers, provoke not your Children to Wrath, viz. by hard Usage and immoderate Severity; but bring them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord.* Eph. vi. 4. It is represented as the Part of *Parents* to *chasten their Children, and to pity them, i. e.* to have Compassion on their Weaknesses and Infirmities. *Deut. viii. 5. Ps. ciii. 13.* and *to lay up, or make suitable Provision, as far as they are able, for their Children.* 2 Cor. xii. 14. And *Children* are obliged, on their Parts, to honour and reverence their *Parents*, to receive their good Instructions, to submit to their Discipline, and not to be refractory and disobedient: *A wise Son beareth the Instruction of his Father.* Prov. xiii. 1. *Children, obey your Parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honour*

nour thy Father and Mother, (which is the first Commandment with Promise) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the Earth. Eph. vi. 1, 2, 3. Let Children learn first to shew Piety at Home, and requite their Parents, viz. by making the best Returns they are capable of, for their Tendernefs and Care, and by assisting and supporting them, to the utmost of their Power, if they should stand in need of it; for this is good and acceptable before God. 1 Tim. v. 4.

The Divine Law hath also provided for securing the Rights of *Masters* and *Servants* by obliging them to a proper Conduct towards one another: *Thou shalt not oppress an hired Servant that is poor and needy—At his Day thou shalt give him his Hire. Deut. xxiv. 14, 15. Masters, give unto your Servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in Heaven. Col. iv. 1. Or, as it is expressed in Eph. vi. 9, Ye Masters, do the same Things unto them, i. e. do what is just and right to your Servants, as you would have them deal justly towards you; forbearing Threatening; knowing that your Master also is in Heaven, neither is there any Respect of Persons with him. On the other Hand, the Duty of Servants is thus excellently set*

DISCOURSE XI. 219

set forth : *Servants, be obedient to them that are your Masters according to the Flesh, with Fear and Trembling, in Singleness of Heart, as unto Christ; not with Eye-service as Men-pleasers, but as the Servants of Christ, doing the Will of God from the Heart; with Good-will doing Service, as to the Lord, and not to Men; knowing that whatsoever good Thing any Man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.* Eph. vi. 5, 6, 7, 8. And, again, *Servants are required and exhorted to be obedient unto their own Masters, and to please them well in all Things; not answering again, nor purloining, but shewing all good Fidelity, that they may adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all Things.* Tit. ii. 9, 10.

There are also mutual Rights and Obligations arising from the Relation between *Pastors* and their *Flocks*. *Pastors* are required to feed the *Flock of God* which is among them, taking the *Over-sight* thereof, not by *Constraint*, but willingly; not for filthy *Lucre*, but of a ready *Mind*; neither as being *Lords* over *God's Heritage*, but being *Examples* of the *Flock*. 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. And to watch for their *Souls*, as they that must give an *Account*. Heb. xiii. 17. To preach the *Word*; to be instant in *Season*, out of *Season*; to reprove, rebuke, exhort,

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with all Long-suffering and Doctrine. 2 Tim. iv. 2. And *the People*, on their Parts, are required to know them which labour among them, and are over them in the Lord, and admonish them; and to esteem them very highly in Love for their Works Sake. 1 Theff. v. 12, 13. To count them worthy of double Honour. 1 Tim. v. 17. To obey and submit themselves to them, i. e. to pay a due Regard to their pastoral Instructions and Admonitions, that they may give an Account with Joy, and not with Grief. Heb. xiii. 17. And to make a proper Provision for their Maintenance: Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good Things. Gal. vi. 6. And it is expressly declared, that *the Lord hath ordained*, that they which preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel. 1 Cor. ix. 14.

It may be added, that a proper Regard should also be had to that great Variety of Conditions and Circumstances which is observable among Mankind. Some there are who are distinguished from others by the Splendor of their Condition, by their Interest and Influence, and the honourable Rank they bear in the Community; and such Persons are intitled to a proportionable Degree of Honour and Respect. And accordingly,

accordingly, as we are commanded in the Divine Law *to render to all their Dues*, so particularly *to give Honour to those to whom Honour is due*. Rom. xiii. 7. A just Regard should be also paid to them that are eminent for their Abilities, for their Wisdom and Virtue, their Age and Experience. *The Younger* are required *to submit themselves unto the Elder*. 1 Pet. v. 5. And this holdeth proportionably for our carrying it respectfully towards all that are our Superiors, according to the Nature and Degree of their Superiority. And, on the other Hand, an affable, obliging, condescending Temper and Deportment, remote from contemptuous Pride and Arrogance, is as *justly* due from Superiors to those who are in any Degree their Inferiors, as a proper Honour and Respect is due from Inferiors to them: It is required *of those who are rich in this World*, that *they be not high-minded*. 1 Tim. vi. 17. And this is equally applicable to those who are possessed of any other Advantages or Distinctions. It is also justly expected from them, that they should use their Talents and Advantages for the Good of others. This is not merely left to their own Choice; it is what *Justice* and *the Law of God* demandeth. The Obligation Men are under

der to do this is strongly and significantly represented by our Lord in the *Parables* of the *Talents* and of the *Pounds*. Matt. xxv. 14—30. Luke xix. 13—26. And it is expressly declared, that *unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.* Luke xii. 48.

Thus it appears, that our *Doing justly* includes in it a diligent and faithful Discharge of the Duties and Offices incumbent upon us in the several Stations and Relations in which the Divine Providence hath placed us. And even Gratitude may come under the general Notion of *Justice*, since Benefits received lay those that receive them under Obligations to their Benefactors, which they are bound in *Justice* to discharge, as far as lieth in their Power; at least by their Prayers for them, and by thankful Acknowledgments, when they have not an Opportunity of making any other Returns. This is so evidently *just*, that our Lord observes, that even *Sinners*, those who do not pretend to any extraordinary Degree of Goodness or Righteousness, yet think themselves obliged *to love those that love them, and to do Good to them that do Good to them.* Luke vi. 32;

It is manifest, from the Account which hath been given, that that Part of our Duty towards our Neighbour which is comprehended in our *doing justly* is of very great Extent. It also appears that it is the excellent Design of the Divine Law to preserve to all Men their *just* Rights, and to oblige them in all Respects to maintain an *equal* and *righteous* Conduct towards their Fellow-creatures, and to behave properly to one another in all the Variety of Conditions and Circumstances: And this is evidently conducive both to the Welfare and good Order of Society, and to the Satisfaction and Happiness of particular Persons who exercise themselves this Way. With what Pleasure therefore should we set ourselves to obey this Part of the Divine Law? God hath so considered our Nature, that no Man, except he be perverted and hardened to a great Degree, can knowingly do an *unjust* Thing to others without condemning himself, and being subjected to an inward Shame and Remorse, and to the Reproaches of his own Mind. And on the Contrary, as far as he is conscious of having observed a *just* and *equitable* Conduct towards all Men as he had Opportunity, and of having faithfully discharged the Duties of his Station

Station and Relations, he hath the Approbation of his own Heart, which produceth an inward Pleasure and Satisfaction, and inableth him to lift up his Face without Shame, and with an ingenuous noble Confidence. How happy would it be for Mankind, if the Practice of *Justice* and *Righteousness* universally prevailed! If Men were generally as careful of the Rights of others, as they would have others be of theirs! And were as unwilling to injure others in their Persons, in their Characters and Properties, or whatsoever Enjoyments are dear and valuable to them, as they would be to have themselves injured in any of these Respects! If Rulers and Subjects, Husbands and Wives, Parents and Children, Masters and Servants, Pastors and their Flocks, and in general Superiors, Inferiors, and Equals, in their several Stations, Conditions, and Degrees, were careful to fulfil the Offices incumbent upon them in the civil and social Life, and which the Divine Law enjoins! If this were the general State of Things, what a beautiful Order would be maintained in the World! Society would be a pleasant harmonious Thing. The Confusions, Contentions, and Mischiefs, which infest

Man-

DISCOURSE XI. 225

Mankind, are owing to the Breach of these excellent Rules; and all good human Laws are designed, as far as their Influence reacheth, to engage Men to the Observance of them. But the best Laws which human Wisdom can contrive are in many Respects deficient, and at the utmost extend only to the outward Actions. A Man may so far keep from the open Breach of civil Laws, as not to be chargeable with *Injustice* before any earthly Tribunal, or liable to be punished by human Governments, and yet not be a *just* and *righteous* Man in the Sight of God. It is the Divine Law alone which taketh in all Cases, and regulateth even the most secret Dispositions and Inclinations of the Heart.

I would conclude with Observing, that the best and readiest Way we can take to be *just* to all is to get our Hearts formed to a benevolent Disposition towards all Men: Owe no Man any Thing, saith St. Paul, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law: For this, Thou shalt not commit Adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false Witness, Thou shalt not covet; and, if there be any other Commandment,

the Duties we owe one another, *it is briefly comprehended in this Saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no Ill to his Neighbour; therefore Love is the Fulfilling of the Law.* Rom. xiii. 8, 9, 10. If our Hearts be possessed with Love to Mankind, it will effectually keep us from injuring them, and will cause us to take a Pleasure *in rendering them their just Dues*, and consequently will engage us to the Exercise of *Justice*; and not only so, but of *Charity* and *Mercy* too. And what is included in this I shall endeavour to shew in my next Discourse.



On Delighting in the Laws of God.

DISCOURSE XII.

PSALM cxix. 47.

*I will delight myself in thy Commandments,
which I have loved.*

SUCH is the Goodness of God towards us, and his Concern for our Happiness, that one eminent Part of the Divine Law is designed to oblige us to the Exercise of social Affections, and those Offices by which we may be mutually helpful to one another. These, as hath been observed, may be ranked under two comprehensive Heads, *Justice* and *Charity*, between which, when rightly understood, there is a very close Connexion. There

can be no true Exercise of *Charity* without *Justice*; nor can *Justice*, taken in it's full Extent, be really separated from *Charity* and *Benevolence*: For *Love* may be regarded as a Debt which is due from us to our Neighbour, as the Apostle signifies in that remarkable Manner of Expression, *Owe no Man any Thing, but to love one another.* Rom. xiii. 8. The *Shewing Mercy* to our Fellow-creatures, as well as Acting justly towards them, cometh under that comprehensive Rule which our Lord hath prescribed: *All Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.* Matt. vii. 12.

But yet these are of distinct Consideration. *Justice*, strictly speaking, keepeth us from Wronging or Offering any Injury to our Neighbour, or Invading any of his just Rights: But *Charity* carrieth it farther, and engageth us not only to abstain from Injuring our Neighbour, but to do him all the Good that is in our Power. This is no less expressly required of us than the former, and is in a particular Manner insisted on by our Saviour, the great authentic Interpreter of the Divine Will and Law, who came to explain and enforce it in it's true Perfection and Extent. He calls the Commandment of

Love,

Love, or Charity, his own Commandment. John xv. 12. *This is my Commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.* And, elsewhere, he speaks of it as a new Commandment, which he gave to his Disciples. John xiii. 34. Not as if it were absolutely unknown before: For it was an important Part of the Law of God from the Beginning, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself.* Lev. xix. 18. But our Lord Jesus Christ hath placed it in a more affecting Light, and hath enforced it by new and more powerful Arguments and Motives than was ever done before. Indeed it is so frequently recommended and inculcated in the Evangelical Dispensation, that the Gospel-Law may be properly called *the Law of Love*: We are commanded *to follow after Charity, i. e.* to pursue it, and endeavour to make a constant Progress in it. 1 Cor. xiv. 1. It is represented as the most excellent of Christian Virtues, greater than Faith and Hope, and as that without which all other Gifts and Attainments, and the most specious Pretences to Religion, are vain and of no Avail. 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, 13. The Apostle, after having mentioned several virtuous Affections and Dispositions, adds, *Above all Things put on Charity, which is*

the Bond of Perfectness. It is the sacred *Bond* which unites them together, and whereby they attain to their proper Perfection. *Col.* iii. 14. And it is declared, that *the End of the Commandment is Charity, out of a pure Heart, and of a good Conscience, and of Faith unfeigned.* 1 *Tim.* i. 5.

As to the Nature of this *Charity*, on which so great a Stress is laid in the Word and Law of God, it hath it's proper Foundation in such a hearty Love and Goodwill towards our Fellow-creatures and *Fellow-Christians*, as causeth us earnestly to desire their Happiness. *St. Paul* fitly expresseth it by our *being kindly affectioned one to another.* *Rom.* xii. 10. But, though it is originally founded in the good Affection and Disposition of the Heart, it doth not rest there: It is not merely an inactive Benevolence, reaching no farther than kind Wishes and Inclinations, but produceth suitable Effects both in the Words and in the Actions.

It shews itself in the Words by kind and gentle Language, and by abstaining from harsh and reproachful, from arrogant and contemptuous Expressions, which only tend to irritate and provoke. The *Psalmist* speaks of Persons *who bend their*
Tongues

Tongues like a Bow to shoot their Arrows, even bitter Words. Pf. lxiv. 3. But very different from this is the Character of those in whom *Charity* is the reigning Principle: It will cause them to put the best Construction upon the Actions and Intentions of others which the Case will bear; and, if it be necessary to reprove them, the Rebukes of *Charity* will be *like excellent Oil*, to use the Psalmist's Expressions, *which shall not break the Head.* Pf. cxli. 5. Soft and mild Words, when they are not the Cover of Deceit and Guile, but proceed from a sincere and benevolent Heart, have a natural Tendency to turn away Wrath, to allay the Passions of the Headstrong, and to soothe afflicted Minds. Accordingly it is required of us, that we be *courteous, not rendering Railing for Railing, but contrariwise Blessing.* 1 Pet. iii. 8, 9. *Let your Speech be seasoned with Grace,* saith St. Paul, Col. iv. 6. What is said of the *virtuous Woman* should be the Character of every good and religious Person, *In her Tongue is the Law of Kindness.* Prov. xxxi. 26.

But, though good and kind Words are justly required from us as proper and genuine Expressions of our *Charity*, yet these alone are not sufficient: *My little Children,*

faith St. John, *let us not love in Word, neither in Tongue, i. e. not in these only, but in Deed and in Truth.* 1 John iii. 18. For, as the Apostle James properly observes, *If a Brother or Sister be naked and destitute of daily Food; and one of you say unto them, Depart in Peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those Things which are needful to the Body; what doth it profit?* James ii. 15, 16. Our Charity towards others must shew itself by a Readiness to do them real Services, when we have an Opportunity for it, in that Way in which we can be most useful to them, and which best answers to our Abilities, and to the Necessities of their Case.

The Actions, by which we are to exercise our *Charity* and *Good-will* towards our Fellow-creatures and *Fellow-Christians*, are principally of two Kinds; the doing Good to their Bodies and to their Souls.

The noblest Exercise of *Charity* is that which is employed in doing Good to the Souls of Men, and Promoting their spiritual and eternal Welfare. We should, as we have Opportunity, use our best Endeavours *to convert Sinners from the Evil of their Ways*, to recover them from Error and Ignorance, Vice and Wickedness; and

and help forward their Advances in Wisdom and Holiness by seasonable Instructions and Admonitions, by giving them good Examples, and furnishing them, as far as our Influence reacheth, with the Means of spiritual and moral Improvement. The Ministers and Pastors of the Church are under special Obligations by their Office *to watch over Souls*; and the proper End of their Ministrations is *to save themselves and those that hear them.* 1 Tim. iv. 16. But we must not imagine that the Care of Promoting the Salvation of Souls is intirely confined to them: It is a Duty incumbent upon all *Christians* to contribute, as far as in them lies, towards Spreading the Interests of Religion in the World, and to assist each other in the Knowledge and Practice of *Christianity*. This is the Design of those excellent Precepts, *Comfort yourselves together, and edify one another.* 1 Theff. v. 11. *Exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, lest any of you be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin.* Heb. iii. 13. *Let us consider one another, to provoke unto Love and to good Works, not forsaking the Assembling of ourselves together, as the Manner of some is; but exhorting one another.* Heb. x. 24, 25. *Let your Light so shine before Men,*
that

that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven. Matt. v. 16.

Not only must our *Charity* extend it's Care to the Souls of Men, but to their Bodies too, and to their temporal Concernments. We must not, as Men of persecuting Spirits have often done, under the Pretence of Zeal for Religion, and for the Salvation of Men's Souls, exercise Cruelty upon their Bodies, and injure them in their worldly Affairs and Interests. When *the Disciples* would have called for *Fire from Heaven to consume the Samaritans*, whom they regarded as Heretics and Schismatics, our Lord gave them that remarkable Rebuke, *Ye know not what Manner of Spirit ye are of: For the Son of God is not come to destroy Men's Lives, but to save them.* Luke ix. 55, 56. That most benevolent Saviour and Lover of Mankind went about, in the Days of his *Flesh*, doing Good to the Bodies as well as Souls of Men. That *Charity*, which obligeth us to love our Neighbours as ourselves, will put us upon doing kind Offices with respect to the Necessaries and Accommodations of this present Life, and will make us ready, according to our Ability, to supply their Wants, and relieve their Distresses. Many
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DISCOURSE XII. 235

are the Passages to this Purpose which occur in the Sacred Writings: It may suffice to mention one, *Is. lviii. 6, 7,* where God declares by his Prophet, *Is not this the Fast which I have chosen? To loose the Bands of Wickedness, to undo the heavy Burdens, and to let the Oppressed go free, and that ye break every Yoke? Is it not to deal thy Bread to the Hungry, and that thou bring the Poor that are cast out to thy House? When thou seest the Naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own Flesh?*

But, that we may have a clearer Notion of that *Charity* which is so indispensably required of us in the Divine Law, it will be proper more distinctly to consider the Objects about which it is conversant, and the various Ways in which it must be exercised towards those Objects.

The Objects to which our *Charity* must extend are all Men in general, as far as Opportunity offereth. This is admirably illustrated by our Saviour in the *Parable* of the good *Samaritan*, who performed the most friendly Offices to a *Jew* in Distress, notwithstanding the religious Differences, and bitter Animosities, which had long subsisted between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*. This *Parable* was designed
by

236 DISCOURSE XII.

by our Lord in Answer to the Question proposed to him by a *Jewish* Doctor of Law, whom we are to understand by *our Neighbour* in that Precept, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself*? And, as that Doctor could not deny that the *Samaritan* had acted the Part of a *kind Neighbour* towards the distressed *Jew*, and that the Assistance he gave him was a laudable Action, and shewed great Goodness of Heart, it followed, that it must also be a good and worthy Action in a *Jew* to behave in the same Manner towards a *Samaritan* in the like Circumstances. *Luke* x. 29—37. Agreeable to this Doctrine of our Lord are the Precepts given by his Apostles under the Direction of his Spirit: It is expressly required of us, that *we should be ready, as we have Opportunity, to do good unto all Men.* *Gal.* vi. 10. And that *we should follow that which is good,* both among ourselves and unto all Men. *1 Thess.* v. 15. Our Benevolence must be universal, not limited to any particular Sect or Party, but must flow abroad, as far as we are able, to all that are Partakers of the same human Nature with ourselves, so as to be ready to serve them in the kind Offices of Humanity, and to promote their real Welfare, temporal and spiritual, as far as is in
our

our Power; and, when we can do no more for them, we should at least give them an Interest in our kind Wishes and in our Prayers. And accordingly it is appointed, that *Prayers, Supplications, Intercessions, and Giving of Thanks, be made for all Men*; and this in Conformity to the Will of God, *who would have all Men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth.* 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4.

But, although our *Charity* must extend to all Men in general, as far as we have an Opportunity for it, yet it doth not exert itself towards all with equal Force, but must be exercised towards them in various Proportions and Degrees. And indeed, however general and diffusive our benevolent Disposition may be, our Power of actually doing Good is confined comparatively to a few, and, for the most Part, to those that come under our own particular Notice and Cognisance. With respect to the far greater Part of Mankind, our Benevolence for Want of Opportunity is inactive, and is little more than a fair Idea or kind Inclination. Some there are with whom we have more particular Connections; to whom we are nearly united by Ties of Consanguinity or Affinity, or by an intimate Acquaintance or Friendship:
Such

Such Persons, if other Circumstances be equal, and if there be no particular Reason to the Contrary, are to be preferred to those who are more remote, so as to have a larger Share in the Effects of our Benevolence. This is what Nature and Providence seem to direct to, and hence the Apostle determineth, that, *if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own House, he hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel.* 1 Tim. v. 8. And, if we consider the Matter aright, we shall find that it is necessary for the general Good, that every Man should look upon himself to be, ordinarily, and in the first Place, obliged to shew Kindness to those to whom he is most nearly related, or with whom he hath a particular Connexion and Intimacy, though not to them only: For, if every Man thus endeavoured to do Good within his own narrower Circle, and at the same Time was ready, as Occasion offered, for Acts of more extensive Benevolence, the Good of the Whole would be effectually promoted: Whereas a mere general Good-will exercised towards all in an equal Degree, and inclining to do no more for one than another, would in Reality and Effect be of little Advantage to any.

It must farther be observed, in order to our having a right View of *Charity* in it's Operations and Effects, that it is variously exercised towards Men, according to their different Conditions and Circumstances; according to their different Characters, whether good or bad; and according to their different Dispositions and Actings towards us, whether as Friends and Benefactors, or as Enemies and Injurious.

Let us consider it in each of these Views.

Charity is diversified in it's Workings and Effects, according to the different Conditions and Circumstances of those with whom we have to do. Towards those who are in prosperous Circumstances it will express itself by rejoicing in their Welfare, and being ready by all proper Means to promote it. Nothing can be more inconsistent with *Charity*, than to grudge and repine at the Advantages and Prosperity of our Neighbour: *Charity envieth not.* 1 Cor. xiii. 4. On the contrary, it will cause us to take real Satisfaction in the Abilities, Reputation, or Usefulness of others, and in any happy Event which hath befallen them: Accordingly we are required to *rejoice with them that do*

rejoice. Rom. xii. 15. And, as to those that are under Adversity and Affliction; many are the Ways in which *Charity* exerciseth itself towards them: If they are in Grief, it will engage us to sympathise with them, and to do what we can to alleviate their Sorrows: If they be in very indigent Circumstances, it will make us willing to contribute, as far as we are able, for supplying their Wants: If they be perplexed, it will incline us to give them our best Counsel and Advice: If they be dejected, to raise and encourage them: If oppressed, to assist and relieve them. There are many Precepts to this Purpose in the holy Scriptures: We are commanded *to bear one another's Burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ.* Gal. vi. 2: *to weep with them that weep.* Rom. xii. 15. *to comfort the Feeble-minded.* 1 Thess. v. 14. *to remember those that are in Bonds, as bound with them; and them that suffer Adversity, as being ourselves also in the Body.* Heb. xiii. 2. It is declared that *pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the Widows and Fatherless in their Affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the World.* Jam. i. 27. An eminent Instance of active *Charity* is: Succouring the Distressed we have in
that

that excellent Person *Job*, who, from the *Testimony of a good Conscience*, could give that noble Account of his own Conduct: *I delivered the Poor that cried, the Fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The Blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the Widow's Heart to sing for Joy.—I was Eyes to the Blind, and Feet was I to the Lame. I was a Father to the Poor.* Job. xxix. 12, 13, 15, 16.

And, as *Charity* suiteth itself to their various Conditions and Circumstances, so it is differently exercised towards them according to their different Characters, whether good or bad. With regard to good Men, it will cause us to embrace them with a cordial Affection and Esteem, and to love them most in whom we discern most of the amiable Image of God and our Lord *Jesus Christ*. We are required, *as we have Opportunity, to do Good unto all Men, but especially unto them who are of the Household of Faith.* Gal. vi. 10. Our Goodness should extend, in a particular Manner, *to the Saints that are in the Earth, and to the Excellent, in whom our Delight should be,* as the Psalmist tells us his was. Ps. xvi. 2, 3. This special Affection towards good Men is expressed in the New Testament by *brotherly Love*, or *brotherly*

ness. To this those Precepts refer, *Let brotherly Love continue.* Heb. xiii. 1. *Having your Souls purified unto unfeigned Love of the Brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure Heart fervently.* 1 Pet. i. 22. The Mistakes and Defects we observe in them should not interrupt this sacred *brotherly* Communion. We must be ready to bear with their Weaknesses and Infirmities, and, when we see it necessary to reprove them, we should do it in such a Manner as may shew that it proceeds from Love and a real Concern for their Welfare, and not from a Spirit of Pride or Bitterness. Such well-tempered Reproofs are true Acts of *Charity*. Remarkable to this Purpose is that Precept, *Lev. xix. 17. Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thy Heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour, and not suffer Sin upon him.* Brethren, saith St. Paul, *if a Man be overtaken in a Fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the Spirit of Meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.* Gal. vi. 1. If our *Fellow-Christians* differ from us in Opinion, with Relation to some Points of Doctrine, or Rites and Modes of Worship, this ought not to hinder our Regarding and Treating them as Brethren, when we have Reason to think

think they *serve God in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, and have their Fruit unto Holiness.* Charity in such a Case teacheth us to make all proper Allowances for the Biases of Education, and for Men's different Capacities, Opportunities, and Means of Improvement; and not be too rigid in our Censures for real or supposed Errors: *Him that is weak in the Faith receive ye, but not to doubtful Disputations.* Let us not judge one another any more, but judge this rather, that no Man put a *Stumbling-Block, or an Occasion to fall in his Brother's Way.* Let us follow after the Things which make for Peace, and Things wherewith we may edify one another. Rom. xiv. 1, 13, 19. *Walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith ye are called, with all Lowliness and Meekness, with Long-suffering, forbearing one another in Love, endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.* Eph. iv. 1, 2, 3.

o With regard to bad or wicked Men continuing such, Charity doth not oblige us to cultivate a special Intimacy with them, or to make them our chosen Companions; which might indanger our own Purity and Virtue: But it should shew itself by Pitying their Persons, at the same Time that we abhor their Vices; by a

244 DISCOURSE XII.

Readiness to assist them in their Distresses, and perform to them the kind Offices of Humanity; by praying for them, by admonishing them; as far as we have Opportunity; and by doing what we can to convince them of their Guilt and Danger, and to turn them from their evil Courses. To encourage us to do this, it is declared, that *he which converteth the Sinner from the Error of his Way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall hide a Multitude of Sins.* James v. 19, 20. We are required to *warn them that are unruly.* 1 Thess. v. 14. And, on the other Hand, though they have been among the greatest of Sinners, yet, if we observe in them any Dispositions to repent, and forsake their evil Ways, *Charity* should put us upon doing all in our Power for Assisting and Encouraging them to do so: For we are assured, that *the Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance.* 2 Pet. iii. 9. which is admirably exemplified in the *Parable* of the *returning Prodigal.*

Finally, *Charity* may be considered, as exercised both towards our Friends and Benefactors, and towards our Enemies and them that have injured us. With regard to our Benefactors, those who have shewn

us great Kindness, and from whom we have received Favours and Benefits, it will exert itself in the generous Emotions of a grateful Temper. Gratitude may, as was observed in a former Discourse, come under the Notion of *Justice*, as it includes a Making those Returns which are justly due for Benefits received. But, in a Soul that is under the Influence of an enlarged Benevolence, it is carried beyond mere Justice, and is heightened into a noble Generosity of Mind, which will be desirous, if possible, of rendering more than an Equivalent, and will cause the Heart to overflow in grateful, in friendly Affections.

As to our Enemies, and those that have used us ill, *Charity* doth not oblige us to treat them with the same Endearments of Affection as we do our Friends and Benefactors: But it should exert itself towards them by a Readiness to forgive and be reconciled to them, in Opposition to a bitter implacable Resentment and Retaliation of Injuries. We must not repay them in their own Way by returning one injurious Word and Action for another, nor should we rejoice in their Misery. Instead of Cursing we should offer up our Prayers to God for them; not indeed for Success in

their evil Courses, but for their Conversion and Amendment, rather than their Ruin; and we should do what we can to bring them to a better Temper of Mind, and to overcome their Enmity *by returning Good for Evil*, which is the noblest Conquest. This is the Design of those admirable Precepts, *Love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do Good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.* Matt. v. 44. *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any Grudge against the Children of thy People.* Lev. xix. 18. *Recompense to no Man Evil for Evil. Dearly Beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give Place unto Wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine Enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him Drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap Coals of Fire on his Head. Be not overcome of Evil, but overcome Evil with Good.* Rom. xii. 17, 19, 20, 21. There is scarce any Thing that our Saviour more expressly insisteth upon than *Forgiveness of Injuries*, which he represents as the indispensable Condition of our Obtaining *the Forgiveness of our own Sins from God.* Matt. vi. 14, 15. And of this he himself hath given the most perfect Example: With his expiring Breath

Breath he offered up his Prayers to his *heavenly Father* for those who were then embruing their Hands in his sacred Blood : *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* Luke xxiii. 34.

What has been hitherto offered relates principally to the Conduct which *Charity* requireth of us towards particular Persons; and the same excellent Principle will engage us to endeavour to promote, as far as we are able, the Welfare and Prosperity of large Communities, in which that of many particular Persons is involved: It will produce in us a noble Public-spiritedness, a generous Concern for the extensive Interests of the *Christian Church*, and for the Good of all Mankind in general, and of our Country in particular; not that partial Love to our Country, which causeth us to despise all others, and to be willing to oppress and enslave them for exalting our own; but such a Love to our Country as will put us upon Doing what we can to promote the common Welfare, and will cause us to contribute towards it by all proper Means in our Power.

Charity appears, upon the View that has been taken of it, to be of a very comprehensive Extent; and it is directly opposed to that inordinate Selfishness, that

narrow contracted Disposition of Soul, which is for Confining it's Regards and Views to it's own private Interest and Advantage : It argues a true Goodness and noble Enlargedness of Heart, and well deserves the Encomiums bestowed upon it by *St. Paul*, in his admirable Description of it in the xiiiith Chapter of his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*.

I shall conclude with two Observations, which naturally arise from what has been offered upon this Subject.

The one is, that the *Charity*, required in the Divine Law, in Proportion as it prevails, tends to render Persons useful to Society, and Blessings to all around them, as far as their Influence reacheth. Princes, if they were animated with this Divine Principle, would become Fathers of their Country ; Men of great Power and Interest would be active in employing it for the public Welfare : Those that are *rich in this World* would be *rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate* ; and even they who are comparatively in poor and mean Circumstances would learn to be contented, and shew their Goodwill to others *in Word and Deed*, as far as lies in their Power. To which it may be added, that *Charity* hath a natural Tendency

dency to cherish and promote that Peace and Concord, which is of great Moment to the common Happiness; and to root out of Men's Tempers that Pride, and Envy, and Bitterness of Spirit, which renders them intractable and contentious, and Nuisances to Society. It will engage us to put the most favourable Construction upon the Words and Actions of others, and he will make us careful not to do any Thing needlessly to provoke, or give them Offence. Thus shall we answer the Intention of those Evangelical Precepts: *Be ye of one Mind, i. e. be ye united in the same friendly Affection one towards another; live in Peace; and the God of Love and Peace shall be with you.* 2 Cor. xiii. 10. *Follow Peace with all Men, and Holiness, without which no Man shall see the Lord.* Heb. xii. 14.

The other Observation is, that *Charity* tends not only to render Persons useful to others, but happy in themselves. All the Duties which have been mentioned, as comprehended under the general Name and Notion of *Charity*, are only the various Effects and Flowings forth of Love and Benevolence: And Love carrieth Delight in it's Nature and Exercise. That Soul hath certainly an inward Source of Pleasure,

fure, in which this noble Difpofition dwells. The Pleafure of *doing Good*, which is the Subftance of the Duties required of us towards our Neighbour, is among the greateft our Natures are capable of. We are fo conftituted that, in pitying and relieving the Neceffities of others, we refresh our own Bowels; and we cannot promote their Happinefs, but at the fame Time, by the Satisfaction arifing from it, we really promote our own. May I not appeal to thofe who have exercifed themfelves this Way? Have you not found an inward confcious Pleafure, when you have *drawn out your Soul to the Hungry, and fatisfied the afflicted Soul?* When you have been instrumental in giving Eafe to the Miferable, and your Fellow-Creatures have rejoiced through your Means, have not you felt a fecret Complacency within, their Joys transfufed into your own Breafte? And, the more diffufed the Benevolence is, the more enlarged is the Joy, refembling in fome Meafure that which the fupreme Being taketh in the free Communications of his own Goodnefs. Let Reafon, impartial Reafon, judge, which leads the happier Life, and enjoys moft of a true Satisfaction, the Man whole generous Heart is filled with Bene-

DISCOURSE XII. 251

Benevolence towards Mankind, or that is under the Influence of a mean Selfishness and narrow sordid Affections? He who hath *the Blessing of him that was ready to perish coming upon him, and who causeth the Widow's Heart to sing for Joy*; or he that *oppressed the Needy, and hath the Cries of the Poor, the Widow, and the Fatherless*. against him? He that rejoiceth in his Neighbour's Welfare, or he that envieth his Prosperity? He that from a noble Disposition is *ready to forgive Injuries and to overcome Evil with Good*, or he that burneth with an eager Thirst of Revenge for every imagined Injury, and by keen Retaliations perpetuates Feuds and Animosities? Whether is it more *pleasant for Brethren to dwell together in Unity*, or to be distracted and torn in Pieces by Enmity and Discord? Will it bear a Debate which yields the noblest Satisfaction, that *Wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and of good Fruits, without Partiality and without Hypocrisy*; or that *bitter Envy and Strife which produceth Confusion and every evil Work*? It may indeed seem to be a hard Lesson to be obliged to subdue the strong Passions of Wrath, Hatred, and Revenge: But it is

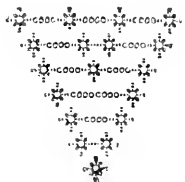
252 DISCOURSE XII.

is absolutely necessary for our own Happiness, that we should do so, whatever Pains or Difficulties it may cost us; since these Dispositions carry Torment in their Nature, and, where they prevail, tend to fill the Soul with Rage and Bitterness; and, when gratified, yield only an ill-natured and malignant Pleasure. To forbid us to entertain and indulge such malevolent Affections towards others is in Effect to forbid us to vex and torment ourselves.

And now, upon the Whole, it is manifest that the Observance of those of God's Commandments, which prescribe a benevolent Temper and Conduct towards Mankind, is really conducive to our own Happiness: They evidently bear upon them the Impressions of the Divine Goodness, and lead us to resemble the best of Beings in his most amiable Perfections. It is declared, that *God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* 1 John iv. 16. The Soul that is possessed with a sincere and extensive Benevolence is in a particular Manner fitted for receiving his gracious Communications. The Holy Spirit of Love and Peace will delight to dwell in such a Heart, and to shed his sacred Consolations there. And it

it should mightily heighten our Joys to consider, that the all-sufficient *Jehovah*, who is so infinitely exalted above our Services, yet hath been pleased for our Encouragement to signify to us, that what Good we do to our Fellow-Creatures, in Conformity to his Will, and in Obedience to his Commands, he will accept and reward as if done to himself. Finally, The Exercise of *Love* and *Charity* hath a manifest Tendency to prepare us for that State of perfect eternal Love and Peace in God's immediate Presence and Kingdom above. The Soul that is filled with Love is formed into the Temper of Heaven, and may in Proportion be said to have Heaven brought down in some happy Beginnings here on Earth : For *Charity never faileth.* 1 *Cor.* xiii. 8. It is and shall be the everlasting Temper of the blessed Angels and glorified Saints. Their *eternal Life* shall be *eternal Love*. And as they shall be perpetually receiving the blissful Emanations of Divine Life and Light, of Love and Joy, from God the indeficient Fountain of all Good ; so they shall be perpetually communicating their Joys to one another. There shall therefore be an endless Circulation of Joys ; the Satisfaction

faction and Happiness of every one of them shall be the Satisfaction and Happiness of all the rest; whilst *the God of Love* shall delight in them as the living Images of his own Goodness to all Eternity.



On Delighting in the Laws of God.

DISCOURSE XIII.

P S A L M cxix. 47.

*I will delight myself in thy Commandments,
which I have loved.*

THE Law of God, which we are under indispensable Obligations to obey, is of great and noble Extent. *The Commandment is, as the Psalmist expresseth it, exceeding broad, and taketh in the whole Compass of our Duty.* It hath been shewn that it extends both to the Duties we more immediately owe to God, and to those we owe to our Fellow-Creatures, as comprehending the Exercise of *Justice and Charity* in all their various Branches.

Branches. And it appears, from the View that has been taken of them, that the Performance of those Duties has a Tendency to produce a true rational Satisfaction and Delight. There is another Part of our Duty more immediately relating to ourselves, which is also required in the Divine Law, and the Practice of which, as well as the former, is essential to a truly religious and virtuous Character. This is what *St. Paul*, in the Passage before referred to, *Tit. ii. 12*, expresses by *our living soberly*; which is not merely to be understood of *Sobriety* in the common Acceptation of the Word, as opposed to *Rioting and Drunkenness*, though this also is necessarily included; but it takes in the Whole of Self-Government, or that regular Temper and Conduct in the Management of ourselves, which becomes us, as reasonable and moral Agents. And this is certainly of great Importance to the true Happiness and Perfection of our Natures, and without which we cannot be well qualified for the right Performance of our Duty either towards God or Man.

And here the first Thing I would observe, as necessary to the right Government of ourselves, is that we should endeavour to get our Minds well furnished with useful Knowledge, and seasoned with good religious

DISCOURSE XIII. 257

ous Principles and moral Sentiments; and that we should exercise ourselves in serious Consideration and Reflection. God is represented as highly displeas'd with those who continue in a contented Ignorance, and take no Care to make a right Use of their thinking Powers: *It is a People of no Understanding, therefore he that made them will not have Mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no Favour.* II. xxvii. 11. Their *Want of Knowledge* is represented as the Cause of their *Destruction*: *My People are destroyed for Lack of Knowledge.* Hof. iv. 6. Accordingly we are frequently exhorted and required to apply ourselves to the Attainment of true Wisdom and Knowledge: *Wisdom is the principal Thing, therefore get Wisdom; and, with all thy Getting, get Understanding.* — *Take fast hold of Instruction, let her not go; keep her, for she is thy Life.* Prov. iv. 7, 13. *Be ye not unwise, saith the Apostle, but understanding what the Will of the Lord is.* Eph. v. 17. And *the new Man*, which we *Christians* are required to *put on*, is said to *renewed in Knowledge after the Image of him that created him.* Col. iii. 10. That Knowledge which is of the greatest Importance to us is the Knowledge of God, of his glorious Perfections and governing Providence, and of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the

258 DISCOURSE XIII.

great *Mediator between God and Man*; the Knowledge of the Terms of our Acceptance with God, and of the Duties which are required of us in this State of Trial, and of a future State of Retribution. And there are few but, if they will make Use of Instruction provided for them, and give that Attention which the Importance of the Case deserves, may attain to such a Knowledge of these Things as will be of great Use for regulating their Temper and Practice. This is evident from Fact and Experience: Many Instances of this Kind are to be met with, even among those of low Condition and Capacities. And for any wilfully to neglect the Improvement of their Minds with religious Knowledge, and to indulge themselves in a wretched Ignorance of those Things which it is most necessary for them to know, is a most inexcusable Conduct, and unworthy reasonable Beings. But it is not sufficient for us to endeavour to get our Minds furnished with just Notions of these Things: We must also endeavour by serious Consideration and Reflection to impress them deeply upon our Hearts, and to get them wrought into the Temper of our Minds, that they may become living Principles in us, and may have a proper Effect and Influence upon our whole Deportment.

ment. We must be particularly careful to preserve upon our Spirits a strong and lively Sense of the moral Differences of Things, and to get our mental Taste and Discernment more exercised and improved, that we may have an intimate and exquisite Sensation of the Beauty and Excellency of true Holiness, Goodness, and Virtue, and may have our Hearts brought to a fixed generous Abhorrence of what is base and false, unjust and impure. It highly concerneth us to get our Consciences duly informed and enlightened, and frequently to examine the State of our own Minds, that we may observe and rectify what we find to be amiss there. The Power of Self-Reflection is one of the noblest our Natures are furnished with: And the right Use and Exercise of this Power is absolutely necessary to *the Keeping of the Heart with all Diligence*, and to the Exercising a proper Discipline over it, which is a most important Part of Self-Government. This is what Religion prescribes; and in this, as well as other Respects, it is, when rightly understood, the greatest Friend to the real Culture and Improvement of the rational and moral Powers. As far as we follow it's Dictates, we live a Life of Reason; we are made acquainted with Things of the greatest

Worth and Importance; we propose to ourselves the most excellent Ends, and pursue them by the properest Means; in which true Wisdom doth eminently consist. And for this the holy Scriptures afford the best Helps: *They are able*, as the Apostle speaks, *to make us wise unto Salvation.* 2 Tim. iii. 15. *The Entrance of thy Word*, saith the Psalmist, *giveth Light; it giveth Understanding unto the Simple.* Pf. cxix. 130. Nothing therefore can be more reasonable than the Injunction which is laid upon us *to search the Scriptures*, John v. 39. How thankful should we be to God for the glorious Discoveries which are there made to us? And to suffer these Divine Oracles to lie neglected by us would argue the greatest Ingratitude towards God, and the most unaccountable Inattention to the Means of our own Happiness and spiritual Improvement. It highly concerneth us therefore to guard against that Dissipation of Thought which is so unbecoming to intelligent Beings, and which rendereth us averse to exercise our thinking Powers even upon Things of the highest Consequence. And, though to apply ourselves to serious Consideration may at first appear difficult and disagreeable, it shall be amply compensated by the happy Advantages which shall attend it:

When

D I S C O U R S E XIII. 261

When Wisdom entereth into thine Heart, and Knowledge is pleasant unto thy Soul, Discretion shall preserve thee, Understanding shall keep thee. Prov. ii. 10, 11.

Secondly, Another Part of the Duty required of us, with regard to ourselves, is that we should labour to keep the Body in a due Subjection to the Mind, and to govern the fleshly Appetites, and restrain them in their proper Bounds. Man consisteth of Body and Mind, of a sensitive and rational Part; and the Spirit or Mind is undoubtedly the noblest Part of our Nature, and was formed to be the governing Principle. When the sensitive fleshly Appetites are kept in a regular Subordination to the higher Powers of Reason and Conscience, then it is that the human Nature preserveth it's proper Order, and it is fitted for attaining to that Perfection and Happiness, for which it was originally designed. The Body indeed is not to be neglected; it's Health and Safety, and in many Cases it's Pleasure too, is to be consulted. God hath implanted bodily Instincts and Appetites for wise Purposes, and hath so ordered it, that there are pleasing Sensations annexed to the Gratification of them. Pleasures flow in upon us at the Eye, the Ear, the Taste, and all the bodily Senses; which contribute not a little to the

Entertainment of human Life. And the Author of our Being certainly never intended to forbid and condemn all Gratification of those Appetites which, by his own Appointment, were interwoven into the animal Constitution, and into the very Frame of our Natures, whilst we are *in the Body*. But then the Danger lies here, that Men are apt to suffer themselves to be so far carried away by those animal bodily Pleasures, as, for the Sake of them, to neglect and disregard the nobler Exercises and Enjoyments of Reason and Virtue. Bewitched with sensual Gratifications, they let loose the Reins to the fleshly Appetite; and, when this, which is a blind Principle, not designed or fitted to govern, usurpeth the Sovereignty, nothing but Confusion must ensue. A wretched and unnatural State this! It often happens, that *the Flesh* obtains such Power as to sway the Determinations of the Will contrary to the Dictates of Reason, or even so far inflaves Reason itself, as to cause it to pronounce on the Side of Appetite, and to employ it's noble Powers only *to make Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof*. When this is the Case, the Nature of Man is degraded from it's original Dignity; it is debased and brutified, and rendered incapable of enjoying it's proper Happiness.

Now

DISCOURSE XIII. 263

Now therefore the great and noble Design of Religion and the Law of God is to recover the human Nature from ~~this~~ its degenerate State, to restore Reason to the Throne, and assert its Dominion over the inferior Appetites and Passions; not indeed to extinguish those Appetites, but to guard against Excess, and keep them within just Bounds. It is no small Part of Wisdom and Self-Management to govern our Inclinations even towards lawful bodily Pleasures, so as still to maintain the Superiority of the Mind, and not suffer those Pleasures to captivate our Reason, or to indispose us for spiritual and Divine Enjoyments. Hence the *Christian* Life is expressed by *walking not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit*: *There is no Condemnation, saith St. Paul, to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.* Rom. viii. 1. There is indeed, and always will be, whilst we are *in the Body*, a Struggle, in a greater or less Degree, between *the Flesh and the Spirit*. But the proper Office of Religion is to assist and render us victorious in that *Conflict*: And, when, through the gracious Aids of God's Holy Spirit, and by exercising a constant Care and Discipline over ourselves, *the Flesh* is so far subjected to *the Spirit*, that its Opposition is in a great Measure subdued,

the inward Peace and Tranquillity, the Satisfaction and Self-Enjoyment which arises from it, is not to be expressed. To engage us to this is the Design of those excellent Precepts and Representations, *Walk after the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the Lusts of the Flesh.* Gal. v. 16. *To be carnally minded is Death, but to be spiritually minded is Life and Peace.—We are Debtors, not to the Flesh, to live after the Flesh: For, if ye live after the Flesh, ye shall die; but, if ye through the Spirit do mortify the Deeds of the Body, ye shall live.* Rom. viii. 6, 12, 13. It is not indeed bound upon us, as our Duty, to exercise ourselves in those rigid Austerities which tend to hurt and dishonour the Body, to mar the Comfort of Life, and render it gloomy and disagreeable. *These Things may have a Shew of Wisdom in Will-worship and Humility, and neglecting, or as it is rendered in the Margin, not sparing the Body;* but they are not enjoined in the Divine Law. Col ii. 23. Yet it is our Duty to keep the Body under, as the Apostle tells us he did, 1 Cor. ix. 27. We must take Care that we do not, by too much Pampering and Indulging the Flesh, add Force to it's Appetites, and increase the Difficulty of subduing them. We must do what we can to keep our Bodies pure and sacred, and in a proper Disposition

DISCOURSE XIII. 265

to serve *the Mind*, considering that *we are not our own, but are bought with a Price*; and therefore are obliged to *glorify God in our Bodies and Spirits, which are his.* 1 Cor. vi. 20. This seems to be particularly intended in that excellent Exhortation, *Rom. xii. 1. I beseech you, Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that ye present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable in his Sight, which is your reasonable Service.*

There are two natural bodily Appetites which deserve to be taken particular Notice of, on this Occasion, as what we are especially concerned, and obliged by the Divine Law, to keep within proper Bounds, *viz.* the Appetite of Meat and Drink, and the fleshly Concupiscence. The Virtue by which the former is governed is called *Temperance*; that which regulateth the latter is *Continence* or *Chastity*.

First, With regard to the first of these it must be observed, that, as Food is necessary to the Sustainance of the Body and Preservation of the human Life here on Earth, the Author of our Beings hath wisely implanted in us a strong Appetite towards it, which, when gratified, excites a pleasurable Sensation: And, if it were not for this, we might be apt too often to neglect the necessary Means of our Nourishment and Support. It
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is allowed us therefore *to eat and drink*, and to take Pleasure in doing so within the Bounds of a just Moderation, and with a thankful Sense of the Divine Goodness. The wise Man pronounceth, that *it is good and comely for a Man to eat and drink, and to enjoy the Good of all his Labour that he taketh under the Sun, all the Days of his Life which God giveth him.* And he adds, that *this is the Gift of God.* Eccles. v. 18, 19. See also Chap. ii. 24. iii. 12, 13. And in the New Testament it is declared, that *every Creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with Thanksgiving.* And a severe Censure is passed upon those as *false Teachers and Deceivers*, who commanded to abstain from divers Kinds of Meats, which God hath created to be received with Thanksgiving, of them which believe and know the Truth. 1 Tim. iv. 1, 3, 4. Thus we see how admirably *Christianity*, in this as well as other Instances, keeps clear of all Extremes; and suitable to this was the Example of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the most perfect Pattern of all moral Excellence: He came *eating and drinking*, *i. e.* he allowed himself in the moderate Use of Meats and Drinks; and, though he never transgressed the Rules of Temperance, the *Pharisees* took Occasion to reproach him, because he did not himself practise,

practise, nor bind upon his Disciples the Observance of those frequent rigorous Fastings upon which they valued themselves. That the Gospel is far from countenancing such a severe Abstinence as tends to hurt the Body appears from that Injunction of St. Paul to Timothy, *Drink no longer Water, but use a little Wine for thy Stomach's Sake, and thine often Infirmities.* 1 Tim. v. 23.

But then, on the other Hand, Intemperance, and an excessive Indulgence of the Appetite of Meat and Drink, is most expressly forbidden in the Holy Scriptures; *When thou sittest to eat with a Ruler, consider diligently what is before thee; and put a Knife to thy Throat, if thou be a Man given to Appetite. Be not desirous of his Dainties; for they are deceitful Meat.* Prov. xxiii. 1, 2, 3. And again, Verses 20, 21. *Be not amongst Wine-bibbers, amongst riotous Eaters of Flesh: For the Drunkard and the Glutton come to Poverty, and Drowsiness shall clothe a Man with Rags.* And the sad Effects of Drunkenness are there most elegantly and pathetically described, Verse 29—35. The best and wisest Men in all Ages have concurred in representing Intemperance in Eating and Drinking as a most shameful and unmanly Vice, which tends not only to dishonour the Body, but to debase the Soul, and to abuse
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268 DISCOURSE XIII.

and stupify the rational Powers; and opens a Way to the most scandalous Enormities. But, besides this, we are particularly warned against it in the Gospel-Law, as altogether unbecoming our Character and Privileges as *Christians*: *The Night is far spent, the Day is at Hand: Let us therefore cast off the Works of Darknes, and let us put on the Armour of Light.* Let us walk honestly, or decently and orderly, *εὐσχημόνως*, as in the Day, not in Rioting and Drunkenness. Rom. xiii. 12, 13. St. Paul opposes the being drunk with Wine to the being filled with the Spirit. Eph. v. 18. And our Saviour represents the Indulging to Riot and Intemperance as inconsistent with making a due Preparation for the future Judgment: *Take Heed to yourselves, saith he, lest at any Time your Hearts be overcharged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, and Cares of this Life, and so that Day come upon you unawares.* Luke xxi. 34. And, finally, *Drunkenness, Revelings, and such-like*, are reckoned among the *Works of the Flesh*, concerning which it is declared, that *they which do such Things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* Gal. v. 21. These Representations are very wisely designed to prevent our giving Way to intemperate Excuses, or, if we have been so unhappy as to suffer ourselves to be intangled
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in Habits of this Kind, should hinder our persisting in them, and should put us upon vigorous Endeavours to shake them off. This indeed may be a Work of great Difficulty, but it is far from being impossible: And by forsaking the base Pleasures of Intemperance we shall be prepared for Satisfaction of a nobler Kind. Temperance tends both to keep the Mind and Powers of Reason sound and clear, and the bodily Senses clean and vigorous. It may therefore be justly said, that the temperate Man hath a far juster Relish even of sensible Enjoyments than the dissolute Debauchee, besides the Satisfaction which ariseth from the Reflections of his own Mind on his having acted in a Manner agreeable to the Will and Law of God, and becoming his rational Nature: And even Fasting and Abstinence on proper Occasions, when it is made Use of as an Help to Devotion, and not carried to a superstitious Excess, yieldeth more of a sincere Satisfaction than all the riotous Joys of the voluptuous Sensualist.

Secondly, Another Part of our Duty, with regard to the Regulation of our bodily Appetites, is *Continnence* or *Chastity*, which consisteth in the due Government of that natural Propension which is designed for the Continuance of the Species. This is
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implanted by the Author of our Beings, and hath a Pleasure annexed to it for wise Purposes ; and, when properly conducted and regulated, it may answer valuable Ends. In the inferior brute Creatures this animal Instinct or Appetite cannot be properly brought under Laws ; but among Men, who are rational Agents, it is necessary that it should be so. It must be governed in such a Manner as to shun Disorder and Licentiousness, and to lay a proper Foundation for Forming Families, and the Relations resulting from thence, and for the orderly Education of Children. For this Purpose Marriage was instituted by Divine Appointment, which is well fitted to be a Source of human Happiness, and was originally intended both to gratify and regulate this Inclination, to direct it in it's proper Channel, and keep it within just Bounds. Indeed Superstition and false Devotion hath carried this much farther. Under Pretence of an extraordinary Degree of Purity, it hath put Men upon binding themselves by solemn Vows to suppress this natural Inclination, and not allow the regular Gratification of it in Marriage, as if this was a Kind of Impurity and Uncleaness: But the Language of the holy Scriptures is very different. *To avoid Fornication,* saith St. Paul,

DISCOURSE XIII. 271

Paul, let every Man have his own Wife, and every Woman her own Husband. 1 Cor. vii.

2. Those are condemned as giving Heed to seducing Spirits, and speaking Lyes in Hypocrisy, who forbid to marry. 1 Tim. iv. 3.

And it is declared that *Marriage is honourable in all, and the Bed undefiled. Heb. xiii. 4.*

But, though the Law of God allows the orderly Gratification of this Appetite, yet it strongly forbids and condemns all irregular Indulgences of it. Not only is Adultery prohibited, which is a Breach of the Marriage-Covenant, and hath been generally condemned by the Laws of civilised Nations, but Fornication too. We are told, that, *Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge. Heb. xiii. 4.* Fornication, as well as Adultery, is reckoned among those *Works of the Flesh*, which, if impenitently persisted in, will exclude Persons from the *Kingdom of God. Gal. v. 21.* This is the Will of God saith St. Paul, even your Sanctification, that ye should abstain from Fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his Vessel in Sanctification and Honour; not in the Lust of Concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: For God hath not called us unto Uncleanness, but unto Holiness. 1 Theff. iv. 3, 4, 5, 6. Our

Di-

272 D I S C O U R S E XIII.

Divine Law, hath extended it so far as to forbid the Indulging impure Inclinations in the Heart: *Ye have heard, saith he, That it was said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not commit Adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart.* Matt. v. 27, 28. And the wise Man, speaking of *the strange Woman*, saith, *Lust not after her Beauty in thine Heart.* Prov. vi. 25. And indeed the Watching over and Suppressing lascivious Inclinations, before they gather too great Strength, is the most effectual Way to prevent their Breaking forth into outward Acts of Uncleanness. We should avoid every Thing in our Conversation and Deportment, which bordereth on Impurity: *Fornication and all Uncleanness—let it not be once named among you, as becometh Saints; neither Filthiness, nor foolish Talking, nor Jestings, which are not convenient.* Eph. v. 3, 4. The more effectually to engage us to Chastity and Purity of Behaviour, *Christianity* teacheth us to regard even our *Bodies* as the *Members of Christ*, and the *Temples of the Holy Ghost*: *Know ye not, that your Bodies are the Members of Christ? Shall I then take the Members of Christ and make them the Members of an Harlot? God forbid.*
—Flee

—*Flee Fornication: Every Sin, i. e. every other Sin that a Man doeth, is without the Body; but he that committeth Fornication sinneth against his own Body. What, know ye not that your Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a Price.* 1 Cor. vi. 15, 18, 19. This Part of the Divine Law is what many are ready to exclaim against, as unreasonably harsh and severe: But such Complaints and Objections proceed not from cool impartial Reason, but from licentious Appetite. The Law of God hath provided for the Gratification of our natural Inclinations within just Bounds, and, if it gave an unrestrained Indulgence to them, it might justly be found Fault with, as it would open a wide Door to all Manner of Disorders. The Mischiefs which such unclean Lusts bring upon those that indulge them are represented in a very striking Manner by *Solomon* in the Book of *Proverbs*: Speaking of the *strange Woman*, so he calls the Harlot and the Adulteress, he saith, *Her End is bitter as Wormwood, sharp as a two-edged Sword. Her Feet go down to Death; her Steps take Hold of Hell. Remove thy Way from her, come not nigh the Door of her House: Lest thou give thine Honour unto others, and thy Years unto the*

Cruel: Lest Strangers be filled with thy Wealth, and thy Labours be in the House of a Stranger, and thou mourn at last, when thy Flesh and thy Body are consumed. Prov. v. 4, 5, 8, 9, 10. See also Chap. vi. 6—35. vii. 22—27. St. Peter likens those who walk after the Flesh in the Lusts of Unclean-ness to natural brute Beasts made to be taken and destroyed. 2 Pet. ii. 10, 12. And St. Paul observes concerning the dissolute Gen-tiles, that, being past Feeling, they had given themselves over unto *Lasciviousness*. Eph. iv. 18. In Proportion as these Lusts prevail, they tend to extinguish the moral Feelings: They defile the Soul, and cast it down from it's Excellency: They render it incapable of relishing the pure and sublime Delights of Religion and Virtue, and consequently dis-qualify it for those Enjoyments in which the Happiness of the rational Nature doth principally consist. When Persons are once brought under the Dominion of impure Lusts, they gradually lose that Sense of Shame and Modesty which is implanted in our Natures as a Preservative to our Inno-cence and Virtue; they are ready to break over all the Bounds of Honour and Consci-ence, and stick at no Means by which they can gratify the headstrong Appetite. And not only do these Lusts, when indulged, produce

produce great Mischiefs to particular Persons and Families, but to large Communities. The Experience and Observation of all Ages shew that, when such Vices become general among a People, they open a Way to all Manner of Dissoluteness and Corruption, and destroy all national Virtue and Probity, and true public Spirit. It is therefore an Instance of great Goodness, as well as Wisdom, in the supreme Lawgiver to lay Restraints by his Laws upon those disorderly Lusts which *war against the Soul*, as St. Peter speaks, 1 Pet. ii. 11. And though the Restraining and Governing them may be very difficult and cost no small Pains and Uneasiness; yet, through the Power of the Considerations and Motives which the Gospel setteth before us, and the Assistance of Divine Grace, which will never be wanting to our sincere and earnest Endeavours, it is far from being impracticable; and the noble and Divine Satisfaction, which will arise from having subdued those irregular and vicious Inclinations, will vastly outweigh all the Pleasures which could be proposed in gratifying them.

Thus I have considered that Part of our Duty towards ourselves, which relateth to the Keeping the Body in a due Subjection to the Mind, and to the Governing the

fleshly Appetites, and Restraining them within proper Bounds: And I have the more largely insisted upon this, because many of the principal Prejudices against Religion and the Law of God are owing to it's Obliging us to regulate those Appetites, and keep them under a proper Discipline: And yet, in the Judgment of right Reason, this ought greatly to recommend it to our Esteem. The most of Mankind are wholly taken up in Pampering, Indulging, Adorning the Body, and Gratifying it's Appetites, as if they looked upon this to be the very End of their Living, and that their Body is their All, or at least the chief Part of their Nature: But it is the Glory and Advantage of Religion, that, by making us sensible of the great Worth and Excellency of our Souls, it teacheth us to maintain the just Order and Dignity of our Nature, and delivereth the Mind from it's base Subjection and Servitude to the *Lusts of the Flesh*, and thus layeth a Foundation for it's Enjoying a noble Liberty and solid Tranquillity, without which it is incapable of true Happiness,



On Delighting in the Laws of God.

DISCOURSE XIV.

PSALM cxix. 47.

*I will delight myself in thy Commandments;
which I have loved.*

THAT Part of the Divine Law which we are now considering relates to the Duties incumbent upon us with Regard to the right Management of ourselves, as distinguished from the Duties we more immediately owe to God, and to our Neighbour. This is what the Apostle expresseth by our *Living soberly in the World*: For Explaining which it was observed, that it includeth, in the first Place, our Endeavouring to improve our Minds, and to get

278 DISCOURSE XIV.

them furnished with useful Knowledge, and well seasoned with good religious Principles and moral Sentiments. It also includeth our Labouring to *keep the Body in a due Subjection to the Soul*, and to govern the fleshly Appetites, and restrain them within proper Bounds: And it was shewn that there is nothing in this but what is highly reasonable and conducive to our own Satisfaction and Happiness.

I now proceed to observe farther, Thirdly, That another important Part of the Duty which is enjoined in the Divine Law, with regard to the right Ordering ourselves, is, that we should maintain an universal Moderation in our Affections and Desires towards what are accounted the good Things of this present World. St. John distributes *the Things that are in the World* under three Heads, *the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life*. 1 John ii. 16. *The Lust of the Flesh* relates to those sensual Pleasures which arise from the Gratification of the fleshly Appetite; and these were considered in our last Discourse. By *the Lust of the Eye* we are probably to understand inordinate Desires after worldly Riches, and those outward Advantages that attend them, which generally attract the Eyes of Men, and contribute to our living with Elegance
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and Affluence. By *the Pride of Life* is signified Power and Dominion, and the Pomp of worldly Honours and Dignities. Daily Observation and Experience may convince us, that we are in great Danger of exceeding in our Desires and Affections towards these Things. Our Fancies dress them up in a gaudy and agreeable Garb, so that we are apt to look upon them as the principal Ingredients in human Happiness. Hence it is that Men are so prone to envy each other on the Account of them, and stick at no Methods for obtaining them, though often at the Expence of Justice, Truth, Friendship, and generous Honesty: And even they who do not make Use of unjust Means to obtain them yet are apt to pursue them with too great Ardour, and to place too much of their Happiness in them, to the Neglect of Things of the greatest Worth and everlasting Importance. The wisest Men in all Ages have been sensible that an excessive Valuation of these outward worldly Advantages, and an inordinate Affection towards them, is the Source of numberless Mischiefs and Disorders in human Life; and have therefore looked upon it as one of the worthiest Offices of Philosophy to provide Remedies and Antidotes against it: But all their Endeavours this Way have fallen greatly short

of the Helps which Religion and the Word of God furnish to this Purpose. And there are two Ways which are principally made Use of in Scripture for moderating our Desires and Affections towards worldly Things: One is by representing to us the vain and transitory Nature of all worldly Enjoyments, and their utter Insufficiency to make us happy: The other is by raising our Affections and Views to Things of an incomparably nobler Nature, the great Things of an eternal World.

Many are the Representations made to us in Scripture of the vain and unsatisfying Nature, the uncertain and transitory Duration of all Things here below. To this Purpose it is observed that *the Time is short, and that the Fashion of this World passeth away.* 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. *Wilt thou set thine Eye, saith the wise Man, upon that which is not? For certainly Riches make to themselves Wings and fly away as an Eagle towards Heaven.* Prov. xxiii. 5. They are therefore called *uncertain Riches*, 1 Tim. vi. 17. For this Reason, among others, our blessed Saviour hath taken particular Care to warn us against an excessive Love of worldly Riches, or putting our Trust in them: *Lay not up for yourselves, saith he, Treasures upon Earth, where Moth and Rust doth corrupt, and where Thieves break through and steal, i. e. do not*
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DISCOURSE XIV. 281

fix your Hearts upon them as your proper Portion and Happiness. *Matt. vi. 19.* And again, *Take Heed and beware of Covetousness; for a Man's Life, i. e. the Happiness of Life, consisteth not in the Abundance which he possesseth.* And he illustrates this by a beautiful Parable concerning the prosperous Worldling, *who said in his Heart, Soul, thou hast much good Things laid up for many Years; take thine Ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* But how soon was his boasted Happiness at an End! *God said unto him, Thou Fool, this Night thy Soul shalt be required of thee: Then whose shall those Things be, which thou hast provided?* *Luke xii. 15, &c.* Nor are worldly Honours more stable than Riches: — *Man, being in Honour, abideth not:—When he dieth, he shall carry nothing away, his Glory shall not descend after him.* *Pf. xlix. 12, 17.* *All Flesh is Grass, and all the Glory of Man as the Flower of Grass; the Grass withereth, and the Flower thereof falleth away.* *1 Pet. i. 24.*

But it would be to little Purpose to represent to us the Uncertainty and unsatisfying Nature of worldly Objects and Enjoyments, if we had no better or higher Things to expect. We are taught therefore in the Word of God to raise our Thoughts and Affections to Things of a more durable and excellent Nature, to aspire after a sub-
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282 D I S C O U R S E XIV.

lime and permanent Felicity provided for us in the highest Heavens. To this Purpose are those Evangelical Precepts, *Lay up for yourselves Treasures in Heaven; seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness.* Matt. vi. 20, 33. *If ye be risen with Christ, seek those Things which are above, where Christ now sitteth on the right Hand of God. Set your Affections on Things above, not on Things on the Earth.* Col. iii. 1, 2. And it is given as the Character of real *Christians*, that *their Conversation is in Heaven.* Phil. iii. 20. And that *they look not at the Things which are seen, but at the Things which are not seen; for the Things which are seen are temporal, but the Things which are not seen are eternal.* 2 Cor. iv. 18. The Intention is not as if we were absolutely forbidden to desire or endeavour to obtain these worldly Goods at all, or to take any Pleasure in them, when by a prudent and honest Industry we have obtained them; but that we must not make them the principal Objects of our Affections and Pursuits. It is Religion, rightly understood, which instructeth to form a just Estimate of worldly Enjoyments, and to regard them as at best no more than temporary Conveniences and Accommodations in our Journey through this World to a better, where alone we can attain to the true Happiness

piness and Perfection of our Natures. And the good Man who regardeth them in this View will both maintain a due Moderation in his Affections and Desires towards these present Things, and will have a more genuine Relish of them, and use them to better Purposes, than other Men. If he has a large Affluence of worldly Riches, by Enjoying them with Temperance and Thankfulness as the Gifts of the Divine Bounty, he extracts all the Good out of them which they are capable of yielding, and at the same Time endeavours to *do Good* with his *Abundance*; and thus he has the noble Pleasure of Employing his Wealth and Power for the Divine Glory, and for Promoting the Happiness of his Fellow-creatures: Or, if he hath a scanty *Portion of this World's Goods*, the Psalmist's Observation holds certainly, that *a little that a righteous Man hath is better than the Riches of many Wicked.* Ps. xxxvii. 16. For he hath the true Enjoyment of that *Little*, and *the Blessing of God* with it. Religion teacheth him to be content with his Share, as what Divine Providence seeth to be fittest for him, and not to envy those that have more: For his Views are principally fixed upon Things of an higher Nature which shall never be taken away

away from him, and in which he is sure never to meet with a Disappointment.

Fourthly, The right Ordering and Management of ourselves, to which we are obliged by the Divine Law, includes not only our Maintaining a due Moderation in our Affections and Desires towards *the good Things* of this present World, but our Endeavouring to get our Minds properly fortified against the outward Evils to which we are now exposed. These are of various Kinds, Pains, and Diseases of Body, Crosses in our Affairs, the Loss of valuable earthly Comforts, Poverty, Contempt, the Injuries that are done in our Persons, Properties or Reputations; in a Word, all Manner of Afflictions and Sufferings, and Death itself. These Things may be properly called *Evils*, as they are troublesome to our Natures, and cause very uneasy Sensations. There are several of our Passions and Affections which are conversant about these Evils: And it is one excellent Design of Religion to moderate those Passions, and so to establish our Minds, that these worldly Evils may not make too deep and powerful Impressions upon us.

The Apprehension of approaching Evils naturally creates Fear; and, when this is kept within the Bounds of a prudent Caution,

DISCOURSE XIV. 285

tion, so as to put us upon proper Measures for averting the Evils which threaten us, it is both allowable and useful. Our Lord directeth his Disciples *to be wise as Serpents,* as well as *harmless as Doves*; and, *when persecuted in one City, to flee unto another.* Matt. x. 16, 23. But it highly concerneth us to guard against an excessive overwhelming Fear, which casteth the Soul into a mean Dejection, and tendeth to put us upon base and unworthy Means for avoiding the Evils we are afraid of. It is the great Advantage of Religion, that, though it doth not encourage us to expose ourselves rashly and needlessly to Evils and Dangers, yet it prepareth us to meet them with a Divine Fortitude. The noble Language of the sacred Writings is this: *Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right Hand of my Righteousness.* Is. xli. 10. *Hearken unto me, ye that hear Righteousness, the People in whose Hearts is my Law. Fear ye not the Reproach of Men, neither be afraid of their Revilings: For the Moth shall eat them up like a Garment, &c.* Is. li. 7. *Be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do.* Luke xii. 4. *If ye suffer for Righteousness, happy are ye; be not afraid*

afraid of their Terror, neither be troubled. 1 Pet. iii. 14. It is declared concerning *the Man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his Commandments, that he shall not be afraid of evil Tidings; his Heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.* Pf. cxii. 1, 7. He regards all the Power and Rage of wicked Men and Devils as under the sovereign Controul of the most powerful, benign, and righteous Lord and Governor of the World, and is persuaded they can do no more than he sees fit for wise Ends to permit.

And, as Religion furnisheth the best Remedy against an excessive Fear of Men or worldly Evils, so also it requireth and assisteth us to moderate our angry Passions which are usually excited by the Apprehensions of Evils or Injuries done or attempted against us. To this Purpose are those Precepts, *Cease from Anger, and forsake Wrath; fret not thyself in anywise to do Evil.* Pf. xxxvii. 8. *Be not hasty in thy Spirit to be angry; for Anger resteth in the Bosom of Fools.* Eccles. vii. 9. *Be ye angry, saith the Apostle, and sin not. i. e.* so govern your Anger, as not to sin; *let not the Sun go down upon your Wrath.* Eph. iv. 26. To signify that we must take Care, that our Anger do not transport us into Excess, or settle in deliberate Malice and Revenge. This is an eminent Instance
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of Self-government, and argues a true Nobleness of Mind: For, as the wise Man observes, *He that is slow to Anger is better than the Mighty; and he that ruleth his Spirit than he that taketh a City.* Prov. xvi. 32.

Another Passion which is apt greatly to affect us, when we are deprived of worldly good Things, or are under the Pressure of worldly Evils, is Grief and Sorrow. And here also Religion comes to our Aid. It doth not absolutely condemn all the Emotions of Sorrow, but forbiddeth the Carrying it to an Excess, and directeth us to guard against that *Sorrow of the World which worketh Death.* What it requireth of us is this, that we *sorrow not as those that have no Hope.* 1 Theff. iv. 13. And that *we weep as though we wept not.* 1 Cor. vii. 30. We must learn to bear the Evils which come upon us with Patience, which is an excellent Virtue, of great Use, and very necessary in this present State: *In Patience, saith our Saviour, possess ye your Souls.* Luke xxi. 19. *Let Patience have her perfect Work, that ye may be perfect and intire, wanting nothing.* Jam. i. 4. That we may be the better inabled to govern our Affections and Passions with regard to worldly Evils, we are instructed in the holy Scriptures to form just Apprehensions concerning them; for our Passions are generally
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very much heightened and exasperated by magnifying those Evils in our Imagination beyond the Reality, We are taught therefore to regard them as comparatively short and transitory in their Duration: That *they can only hurt the Body*, but cannot prejudice us in our nobler Interests: That they are all under the Direction of Divine Providence, and are ordered and appointed by infinite Wisdom, Righteousness, and Goodness for valuable and excellent Purposes: And, finally, that they are Part of the Discipline which our heavenly Father seeth to be necessary for his *Children* here on Earth, for Correcting their Miscarriages; for Weaning their Affections from this present World; for Exercising and Strengthening their Faith, Patience, Resignation, and other Virtues; and for Forming them into a *Meetness for Heaven*. And to him that considereth them in this View they bear a quite different Aspect from what they do to the Rest of Mankind: *I reckon, saith St. Paul, that the Sufferings of this present Time are not worthy to be compared unto the Glory that shall be revealed in us.* Rom viii. 18. And again, *Our light Affliction which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.* 2 Cor. iv. 17. The good Man, and he alone, can upon solid
 Grounds

Grounds glory, or rejoice, in Tribulation, knowing that Tribulation worketh Patience, and Patience Experience, and Experience Hope; and Hope maketh not ashamed, because the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. And certainly no outward Evils or Accidents can render him unhappy, who hath divine Comforts flowing in upon his Soul from the supreme Fountain of Good.

Thus it appears, that Religion and the Law of God, by directing and assisting us to vanquish our Fears, to govern our angry Passions, to moderate our Sorrows, and to maintain a steady Fortitude and Constancy of Soul under all worldly Evils, doth really consult and promote our own Ease and Happiness, and disarmeth those Evils of that which is really most hurtful in them; for, when we are inabled to bear them properly, they can do us but little Harm; whereas, when we suffer them immoderately to affect us, the Tranquillity of our Minds is liable to be broken by every cross Accident which befalleth us. We either sink into an excessive Dejection of Mind, or we give Way to fretting Impatience and querulous Discontent; or we fly out into furious

Transports of rash Anger, or our Spirits are invenomed and imbittered with Malice, Hatred, and Revenge ; all which are greatly disquieting and vexatious. It ought therefore to recommend Religion to our Esteem and Choice, that it tends to remove these Impediments to our Happiness, and to render us superior to all the Evils of this present Life and World.

Several other Things might be mentioned, as included in that Part of the Duty required of us, which relateth to the right Management and Government of ourselves : We must particularly guard against that inordinate Selfishness, which, where it prevaileth, hath a Tendency to harden and contract the Heart, and to extinguish every noble and generous Sentiment ; and must be ready, when a proper Occasion calls for it, to sacrifice our fleshly Ease and Pleasure, and our worldly Interests, for promoting the Honour of God and the Good of Mankind. This in one Word is expressed by *Self-denial*, which, far from being an Enemy to our true Happiness, doth really and most effectually secure and promote it, by engaging us to renounce whatsoever Interests and Gratifications are really inconsistent with it. This argues an excellent Temper of Mind,
pleasing

pleasing in the Sight of God, and which lays a proper Foundation for an inward Satisfaction and Complacency.

Humility is another Instance of Self-regulation, much insisted upon in the holy Scriptures. This is designed to moderate and regulate that that Self-valuation and Love of Esteem, which, when carried to an Excess, is Pride and Vain-glory, whereby we assume to ourselves more Honour and Esteem than really belongs to us, over-valuing ourselves and despising others. It is required of us, that *we put on Humbleness of Mind*. Col. iii. 12. or, as it is elsewhere expressed, that *we be clothed with Humility*; that *we do not think highly of ourselves above what we ought to think, but that we should think soberly or modestly*. Rom. xii. 3. Pride is displeasing to God and Man; it produces Contention, and subjects those in whom it prevails to many Vexations and Disquietudes: Whereas Humility crowns and adorns our other Virtues, and spreads a kindly Influence through our whole Deportment. It causeth us to yield a due Submission and Respect to those who are our Superiors; renders us affable and condescending to Inferiors; gentle and obliging, peaceful and inoffensive towards all; ready to bear

with the Weaknesses and Defects of others from a Conscience of our own. Such a Temper and Conduct manifestly contributes to our own Ease and Tranquillity, and tends to conciliate to us the Good-will and Esteem of those with whom we have to do: But, what is chiefly to be considered, it recommends us to the Favour and Approbation of God himself, who *resisteth the Proud, and giveth Grace unto the Humble.* 1 Pet. v. 5.

Finally, We must endeavour to preserve a true Uprightness, a Candour and Simplicity of Spirit, in Opposition to all Deceit and Guile, and to what the Scripture expresseth by a *double Heart, and a double Tongue.* Sincerity of Heart hath deservedly a great Stress laid upon it in the Divine Law: It derives a Value to all other Endowments, and without it the most splendid Gifts and Endowments are represented as of no Avail to our Acceptance with God. It is that which renders our Conduct and Deportment consistent and uniform; and a Conscience of it hath a manifest Tendency to produce an inward Peace and Self-enjoyment, and an ingenuous Confidence towards God and Man: Whereas the Hypocrite is put to many troublesome Shifts and Disguises to conceal

ceal his real Character from the View of the World, and finds it hard with all his Art to escape the Reproaches of his own Mind. Happy they, who can upon good Grounds say, with the Apostle *Paul*, *Our Rejoicing is this, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our Conversation in the World!* 2 Cor. i. 12.

And now, from the Account that has been given of those of the Divine Commandments, which relate more immediately to the right Management of ourselves, and the Government of our own Appetites and Passions, it is manifest that they are designed to promote our real Happiness. There are many indeed who imagine, that Happiness is only to be found in an unrestrained Indulgence to their fleshly Appetites and Passions: But the Contrary is evident from Reason and Experience. The *Men of Pleasure*, as they are called, are apt to value themselves as if they only knew how to enjoy Life, and despise those, as dull and heavy Souls, who do not give into the same Irregularities and Excesses. But let Reason judge, which hath the truest Pleasure: He whose Life is almost one continued Round

of Revelling and Riot, who seldom leaves the Table and Company till Nature be clogged and overcharged, and who by such a Course both vitiates his Appetites, and lays up Fuel for tormenting Pains and Diseases: Or the Man that sits chearful at his temperate Meals, taking in Moderation what sufficeth to refresh Nature, and not opprefs it; and who with a peaceful Mind can offer up his Thanks to Heaven for his innocent Repast, without any of those Crudities and Surfeits which are the nauseous Fruits of a Debauch? Can the brutish Pleasures of the Incontinent, and which, when the guilty Transport is over, are succeeded by Confusion and Remorse, be compared to the refined Satisfaction of a pure and chaste Soul, or to the innocent Delights and Charms of virtuous Love? What an inward Peace and Serenity doth that Man enjoy who *possesseth his Soul in Meekness and Patience*, and who maintaineth a due Moderation in his Affections and Desires towards the Things of this present World, in Comparison of him who is hurried on in the restless Pursuits of Ambition or Avarice, or whose Heart is swollen with Pride, or inflamed with the angry Passions, or fretted with Envy and Discontent! It is a just Observation, that sensual

sual Lufts and Appetites, the more they are gratified, the more uneasy and importunate they grow: The excessive Indulging them doth but make them more troublesome and head-strong. The Man therefore, who restrains them within due Bounds, according to the Prescriptions of the Divine Law, secures his own inward Peace and Repose, and enjoys the Sweets of a true and noble Liberty: Whereas he that indulges them only nourisheth Lufts to be his own Tormentors; he harboureth domestic Tyrants, which will not suffer him to enjoy a real and solid Tranquillity: They carry on a continual Conflict within, and are often as contrary to one another, as they are all to Reason, hurrying him on to do what his Conscience disapproves, and thereby subjecting him to the Self-condemning Reflections of his own Mind; which is as miserable a Condition as a reasonable Creature can be in. Upon the Whole, may we not justly pronounce those the happiest of the human Race, whatsoever their outward Circumstances may be, who, being freed from the Dominion of irregular Lufts and Passions, enjoy the peaceful Satisfaction which ariseth from Moderation and Temperance, from Purity, Humility, Meekness, and conscious Sincerity,

Sincerity, and from a solid Fortitude and true Greatness of Soul, which are the Dispositions which Religion prescribeth, and which it hath a manifest Tendency to strengthen and improve ?

We have now taken a distinct View of the Precepts of the Divine Law, as relating to the Duties required of us towards God, our Neighbours, and ourselves ; in the Practice of which a truly religious and virtuous Life doth properly consist. And it appears, that in all these Respects the Law of God is conformable to right Reason and to the Nature of Things, and that all it's Injunctions are really conducive to the true Perfection and Felicity of our Nature. Carnal Appetite may remonstrate against it, but it is what Reason and Conscience, where it is not depraved by evil Habits and vicious Prejudices, upon the most impartial Consideration, cannot but approve. And surely what Reason approves must, to a reasonable Being, be a Source of the truest Satisfaction and Delight.

If the Contrary to those Duties which God requireth were bound upon us by a Law ; or if there were no Law at all, but every Man was left to gratify his own Lusts and Passions without Controul ; how wretched

wretched would the State of Mankind be! There would be no Order, and consequently no Safety, nothing but endless Confusion and Misery. Instead therefore of Complaining against God for the Prescriptions of his Law, we ought to adore his Goodness in Giving us such a Law. He is not a severe and rigid Task-master, who delighteth in Imposing hard and unreasonable Burdens upon his Creatures; nor doth he in his Dealings with us act in a Way of mere absolute Authority, but according to the steady Rules of the most perfect Wisdom, Righteousness, and Equity. As his infinite Goodness inclines him to delight in the Peace, the Order, and the Happiness of his reasonable Creatures; so the sacred Requirements of his Law are plainly calculated to promote that desirable End. Superstition indeed has frequently put Men upon doing Things which are very grievous and shocking to Nature: The idolatrous Priests of *Baal* cut and slashed themselves, and many such cruel Rites were made Use of among the *Gentile* Nations; and, almost in every Part of the World, human Sacrifices have been, at one Time or other, offered to their Deities. The Accounts which are given us by credible Authors of the rigid Penances that the
Heathen

Heathen Devotees in the *East-Indies* undergo, are astonishing. Some of them, for a long Time together, powder their Hair with Ashes, and lay themselves naked on the Ground without Bed or Covering : Some voluntarily distort and dislocate their Bones, or bind themselves by strict Vows to remain continually in one Posture : Others load themselves with heavy Chains which they drag after them, as long as they live ; or lie down in the Way by which the Chariots that carry their Idols are to pass in their sacred Processions, that they may run over them, and crush and mangle their Bodies. And, even among professed *Christians* themselves, Superstition has often laid heavy Yokes upon the Disciples, of which it were easy to produce many Instances. But these are the Inventions of Men, which God hath no where commanded in his Word and Law : All that is there enjoined comes in Effect to this, that we should shun whatsoever is unbecoming us as reasonable Creatures, moral Agents ; and should endeavour to begin to be holy and happy here, that we may be fitted for a State of complete eternal Felicity and Glory hereafter. What a kind Master, what a gracious Sovereign, do we serve, whose *very Service is the truest Freedom.*

Freedom, whose Work carries *Delight* in it's Nature and Exercise, and whom to obey is to be happy?

And now the natural Conclusion from all that hath been offered concerning the Divine Commandments is this, that we should apply ourselves with Zeal and Diligence to yield an uniform Obedience to them, through the whole Course of our Lives; and that we should do it with Cheerfulness and Delight. The very Excellency of the Commands themselves should be a powerful Motive and Inducement to engage us to the Observance of them. As far as we are conscious of doing this, we have the approving Testimony of our own Minds, as having acted a right and worthy Part, agreeable to the best Principles of our Frame, and becoming the Dignity of the rational Nature. And this is a Source of inward Satisfaction and Joy, which the World cannot give nor take away. To which it may be added, that it hath a Tendency to procure the Esteem and Good-will of our Fellow-creatures, and that *Good Name which*, the wise Man tells us, is *rather to be chosen than great Riches*. Prov. xxii. 1. A Course of uniform unaffected Piety and Virtue has such genuine Charms, such a Beauty as well

well as Dignity in it, that there are few but are willing to have it thought that they esteem and approve it. Hence *Virtue* and *Praise* are joined together *Phil.* iv. 8. But that which ought to have the greatest Weight with us, and which renders the Practice of the Duties required of us properly an Act of Religion, is, that we are obliged to it by the express Authority of God himself, our great Creator, and our supreme and rightful Lord; and not only by his Authority, but by his Goodness, as he is our most gracious and bountiful Benefactor. We are bound to it, as Men, by the Law of our Creation; and we are under peculiar additional Engagements to it, as we are *Christians*. The very End of *Christ's* Coming into the World, and of what he did and suffered for us, was that *we might serve God in Holiness and Righteousness before him, all the Days of our Lives.* Luke i. 74, 75. All the Riches of the Divine Grace, all the Wonders of redeeming Love, which are set before us in the Gospel, are designed to engage us to Obedience, and *draw* us to it as *with the Bands of Love*. For this Purpose also we have the excellent Example of our Lord *Jesus Christ* proposed to us as our Pattern, who yielded a most per-

fect Obedience to all the Divine Commands, and whose *Delight is was to do the Will of God*, even in the most difficult Instances. And surely the Example of so glorious a Person should have a mighty Influence upon us! How engaging is it to consider, that, whilst we go on in a dutiful Obedience to the Divine Commands, we follow *Christ*, and live as the Son of God lived, when he appeared in human Flesh? And for our farther Encouragement there are the Aids of the Holy Spirit provided for us, which God hath promised to us, and is ever ready to bestow for *helping our Infirmities*, and assisting our sincere Endeavours in the Performance of our Duty, amidst the many Difficulties and Temptations to which we are here exposed. Finally, the more effectually to animate us to Obedience, the most glorious Hopes are set before us, and the most express Promises are given us of an Immortality of Joy and Glory in a better World, as the Reward of our sincere Obedience in this: And this blessed Hope opens to us a new Scene of Divine Pleasures, which tend to spread Satisfaction and Joy through the *Christian* Life. This is what I propose to consider in my next Discourse.

On Rejoicing in Hope of the Glory of God.

DISCOURSE XV.

R O M A N S V. 2.

— *And rejoice in Hope of the Glory
of God.*

WHOSOEVER impartially considers the Duties required of us in the Divine Law must be sensible that they are in themselves most reasonable and excellent, and that, when duly observed, they have a Tendency, in the Nature of Things, to promote our true Satisfaction and Happiness, even in this present State: But yet it cannot be denied, that there are many Difficulties and Discouragements which attend the Practice of *true Religion*
and

and Godliness here on Earth. Such is the Weakness of our Nature in it's present Degeneracy, that we often find a great Backwardness and Indisposition in our Hearts to the Performance of our Duty; the Work of Holiness is imperfect, even in the best of Men; we carry about with us irregular Appetites and Passions, which it requireth no small Pains to mortify and subdue; and we are in continual Danger from the Snares and Temptations of a sinful World, and the Influence of it's corrupt Customs and evil Examples: To which may be added the bitter Censures and Persecutions to which good Men are frequently exposed.— It has often happened, that a steady Adherence to the Cause of *Truth and Righteousness* hath subjected them to great temporal Evils: They have been obliged to abandon their dearest worldly Comforts and Enjoyments, and to submit to the most grievous Sufferings, to Pain, Reproach, Ignominy, and even *Death itself*, for the Sake of *Religion and a good Conscience*. This is what every true *Christian* must be prepared for in Heart and Resolution, though he may never be put to the actual Trial of it. If therefore *this present Life* were all we were to expect, and if there were not a better World

in Prospect, where we may *hope* to be freed from the Evils to which we are now exposed, and to arrive to the true Perfection and Happiness of our Nature, we should be in great Danger of sinking under the Discouragements that lie upon us. It hath pleased God therefore, in his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, to set before us the most glorious Prospects in the *Promises of his Word*, which lay a solid Foundation for the most sublime and *joyful Hope*. And this added to the Excellency of the Divine Precepts, in themselves considered, gives a good Man a vast Superiority, in Point of real Satisfaction and Happiness, to the most prosperous wicked Man upon Earth, and renders a holy and virtuous Life beyond Comparison more eligible and delightful than a Life of Vice and Sin.

St. Paul, speaking in his own Name, and in that of *true Believers*, declares, that, *being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have Access by Faith into this Grace wherein we stand.* And he adds, that *we rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God.* Where it is plainly intimated, that it is the Privilege and Happiness of sincere *Christians, who live and walk by Faith*, that

they have a *Hope of the heavenly Glory*; and that this *Hope*, in Proportion as it prevaileth is a Source of pure and sacred *Joy*.

Hope in general is the Expectation of some Good which we desire; but which we are not at present in the actual Possession and Enjoyment of. When there appears to be but a small Probability of obtaining it, our *Hope* is weak and languid; when the Probability is, or appears to us to be, strong, our *Hope* is lively and vigorous; and, when it arriveth to such a high Degree, that it may be called a *moral Certainty*, this produceth a *confident Expectation* or *Assurance*. Mighty is the Influence of *Hope* upon the human Mind: It is this that is the great Spring of Action. That which chiefly animates and invigorates Men's Endeavours and Pursuits, even with regard to their temporal Affairs, is the *Hope* of Something to be obtained and enjoyed, which hath to them the Appearance of Good: But the *Hope* we are now considering doth not terminate in the Things of this present transitory Life and World. The proper Object of the *Christian's Hope* is that *everlasting Felicity* which is revealed and promised in the Gospel, and which good Men shall be made Partaker

takers of in a future State. Hence it is called by the Apostle *the Hope of eternal Life*. Tit. iii. 7. And, in the Passage before us, *the Hope of the Glory of God*; even that *Glory which shall be revealed*, and to which *the Sufferings of this present Time are not worthy to be compared*. Rom. viii. 18. It is elsewhere called *eternal Glory*: God is said to *have called us to his eternal Glory by Christ Jesus*. 1 Pet. v. 10. 2 Tim. ii. 10. And surely the *Hope* of this, where it is strong and vigorous, must needs fill the Soul with a sincere and solid Joy.

But, that this may appear in a more convincing Light, let us distinctly consider, First, The Greatness and Excellency of that *future Glory*, which is the Object of the *Christian's Hope*. Secondly, The solid Foundation of this *Hope*, or the just Grounds that a good Man and sincere *Christian* hath for his *Hope* of that *future Glory*: And this will naturally lead us to consider the Joy which ariseth from this *Hope*, and the happy Influence it hath upon the *Christian Life*.

First, Let us consider the Greatness and Excellency of that *future Glory and Felicity* which is the Object of the *Christian's Hope*. It is to convey to us an exalted Notion of the *future heavenly Happiness*

that it is called *Glory*: And, when it is here called *the Glory of God*, this tendeth still more to heighten the Idea. It is a *Glory* worthy of God, and of which he is very eminently the Author: For *the Gift of God is eternal Life*, which is only another Word for that future *Glory*. Rom. vi. 23. It is a *Glory* and *Felicity* in some Measure resembling that of God himself, as far as the Capacity of our limited Natures will admit. The sacred Writers seem to be as it were at a Loss for proper Words to describe it: They call it *a Crown of Glory*, *Riches of Glory*, *an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*. They intimate to us that it far transcends the highest Conceptions we are at present able to form concerning it: *It doth not yet appear what we shall be*. Yet several Things are told us, with Relation to it, which may assist us in forming such a Notion of that *future Blessedness* as is sufficient to raise our Desires, and quicken our Aspirations after it.

It is represented as a State where we shall be absolutely freed from all the Evils to which we are now exposed: It is therefore called *a Rest*: *There remaineth a Rest for the People of God*. Heb. iv. 9. And it is declared, that *blessed are the Dead which*

which die in the Lord, that they may rest from their Labours, and their Works do follow them. Rev. xiv. 13. They shall rest from all their present Toils and Troubles, out of the Reach of *the Pride of Men, and the Strife of Tongues.* There shall be nothing to annoy them, or to disturb their peaceful Tranquillity: For *God shall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes, and there shall be no more Death, nor Sorrow, nor Crying, neither shall there be any more Pain; for the former Things, i. e. all the former Evils, are passed away.* Rev. xxi. 4.

As to the positive Notion of that *heavenly Felicity*, it includes the full Perfection of our intire Nature, Body and Soul, in the Enjoyment of all that Good which is necessary to complete our Satisfaction and Happiness. *The Spirits of just Men shall then be made perfect.* Heb. xii. 23. They shall be free from all the Remains of Corruption and moral Defilement which cleaved to them here on Earth, and their Faculties and Powers shall be opened and enlarged to a wonderful Degree: Their Understandings shall be irradiated with the Light of Divine Knowledge; their Wills wholly conformed to the Will of God; their Affections regular, harmonious, and pure; in a Word, they shall be

310 DISCOURSE XV.

holy as God is holy ; so that they shall have an inward never-failing Source of *Divine Satisfaction and Joy*. And even their *Bodies* themselves shall be *raised in Incorruption, in Power, and in Glory*. 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43. So wonderfully shall they be refined, that the Apostle calls them *spiritual Bodies*. They shall no longer be Clogs and Incumbrances to their Souls, but the ready Instruments of their noblest Operations, and arrayed in celestial Splendor *like the glorious Body of Christ himself*. Phil. iii. 21.

And, as their Natures shall then be raised to a high Degree of Perfection and Excellence, so they shall be conversant with the noblest Objects, and their Exercises and Enjoyments shall be such as are suited to their perfected Natures and enlarged Capacities. Nothing can possibly give us an higher Idea of the Happiness of *the Saints in Heaven*, than that they shall there be admitted to *the beatifick Vision and Fruition of the Deity*: *Blessed are the Pure in Heart* saith our Saviour, *for they shall see God*. Matt. v. 8. And Oh how delightful will it be to *behold* the adorable *Jehovah* in all that harmonious Variety of Perfections and Attributes which belong to his infinite Nature ! To *behold* almighty Power,
unerring

unerring Wisdom, boundless Goodness and Love, spotless Purity and Righteousness, in their beautiful and glorious Original! Now as the Apostle speaks, *we see through a Glass darkly, but then Face to Face. Now I know but in Part, but then shall I know even as I am known.* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. And this *Vision of the Deity* shall have a transforming Influence: *I shall behold thy Face in Righteousness*, saith the Psalmist; *I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy Likeness.* Ps. xvii. 15. *The Blessed above* shall have such clear intuitive Views of God's infinite Glory and Loveliness as shall both diffuse unutterable *Bliss and Joy* through all their Powers, and shall impress them more and more with his most amiable Image and Resemblance: God shall then be, in the most eminent Sense, *their Portion*, and they shall receive from him the most abundant Communications of his Goodness; so that, if all the *Fulness of the Deity* can make them happy, they shall be ever so.

And, as they shall then *see God*, so they shall be with *Christ*, admitted to the glorious Presence of the Redeemer: *I desire to depart, and to be with Christ* saith St. Paul, Phil. i. 23. And our Lord himself, in his solemn Address to his *heavenly Fa-*

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ther,

ther, expreffeth himfelf thus: *Father, I will that they alfo whom thou haft given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my Glory which thou haft given me.* John xvii. 24. The matchlefs Glory of the Divine *Immanuel*, the Wonders of his Love, and his great Atchievements for our *Salvation*, fhall be the conftant Subject of their *Praifes*, and fill their Souls with ineffable Raptures of devout *Admiration, Love, and Joy*. Each renewed Reflection upon their own Felicity fhall heighten their Gratitude to the Saviour, and keep a Sense of their Obligations to him ever fresh upon their Minds. And not only fhall they with ravifhed Hearts *behold his Glory*, but fhall be Sharers in it, according to the Measure of their Capacities: He fhall take them into his neareft Embraces, and fhall *rejoice* in them, and they in him, without Interruption or Allay, for ever.

Another Ingredient in that *heavenly Felicity*, which fhould greatly recommend it to our Esteem and Choice, is, that there we fhall be affociated to *an innumerable Company of Angels, to the general Affembly and Church of the Firft-born, and to the Spirits of the Juft made perfect.* Heb. xii. 22, 23. What a noble Satisfaction muft it yield to look around through thofe boundlefs Realms of Light and Glory,
and

DISCOURSE XV. 313

and behold numberless Orders of holy and happy Beings, all chearfully obeying and adoring *the Lord their Maker*, and employing their excellent Faculties and Powers in in doing his Pleasure, and all rejoicing in each other's Happiness ! What are the Pleasures of mortal Friendship, compared with the refined Delights which shall arise from the blissful Society and perfect Friendship of Angels and Saints, all animated with the most lovely Dispositions, united in inviolable Harmony and Concord, and all joining and assisting one another in those Exercises and Enjoyments which are best suited to the Nature and Oeconomy of that heavenly World !

From the brief Account that has been given of that *future Glory and Felicity*, which is represented as the great Object of our *Hope*, it appears to be the highest and noblest our Natures are capable of. And it mightily heightens all this to consider, that, as was before hinted, it shall be *eternal* in it's Duration : It is frequently described to us under the Character of *Life everlasting, eternal Glory*. If that *promised Glory* were to be but of a temporary Continuance, it would greatly diminish the Satisfaction arising from it : For, the greater the Happiness is, the more uneasy would

would the Apprehension of losing it be. But it is a most transporting Thought that this Happiness shall *never have an End!* After Millions of Ages past, beyond the Power of human Arithmetic to compute, it shall be no nearer a Period than it was, when they first entered upon it. And in this it eminently differs from the Riches, Glory, and Pleasures of this present World, which at best can last no longer than during the short Term of this frail and transitory Life. How mean, how low, how fleeting are the most admired earthly Enjoyments, compared with that sublime, substantial, everlasting *Bliss and Glory*, prepared in *Heaven* for us!

Having shewn the Greatness and Excellency of that future *Glory and Felicity* which is the noble Object of the *Christian's Faith and Hope*, let us now consider the solid Foundation of this *Hope*, or the sure Grounds upon which the good Man and sincere *Christian hopes* for that *heavenly Glory*.

And here it must be laid down as a Principle, that the proper Foundation of the *Christian's Hope* is the gracious *Promise and Covenant* of God in *Jesus Christ*: That *future eternal Glory* is what we could not have pretended to claim as strictly due to the
 Merit

DISCOURSE XV. 315

Merit of our Services, even though we had yielded a perfect Obedience to the Divine Law. But this is far from being the Case: *In many Things we offend all.* Jam. iii. 2. *There is not a just Man upon Earth that doeth Good and sinneth not.* Eccles. vii. 20. *We are all of us guilty before God,* and must acknowledge, that, *if he should enter into strict Judgment with us, we could not stand before him, nor be justified in his Sight.* And though from the great Goodness of God we might have expected that he would shew Mercy to *the truly Penitent*, and not deal with them according to the utmost Rigour of Justice; yet upon no certain Grounds of Reason could we have concluded, that he would, upon such an imperfect Obedience as our's, attended with many Failures and Defects, will so transcendent a Felicity as that which is set before us in the Gospel, and which includes *a blessed Resurrection and an Eternity of Joy and Glory in the heavenly World.* This dependeth absolutely upon the free Grace and gracious Favour of God, and upon what it seems fit to him in his infinite Wisdom to determine, and of which we could not pretend to have any Knowledge or Assurance, except he should declare his Will concerning it: And this, to

our unspeakable Comfort, he has been graciously pleased to do in the Gospel. There is indeed great Reason to think that good Men in all Ages have had some *Hope*, though often but a feeble one, *of Happiness in a future State*. The sacred Writer to the *Hebrews* observes, concerning *Abraham*, and other antient Patriarchs, that they considered themselves as *Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth, and desired a better Country. that is, an heavenly; and that they looked for a City which hath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.* Heb. xi. 10, 13, 16. And it is reasonable to believe, that this their *Hope* was originally founded on a *Divine Revelation and Promise*; and that it was a Part of the primitive Religion imparted to the first Parents of the human Race. And to this *St. Paul* seems to refer, when he speaks of *the Hope of eternal Life, which God that cannot lye promised, before the World began*. So our Translators render it, but it had better be rendered *from the Beginning of Ages*, or, as some antient Commentators interpret it, *of old Time, from the Beginning* †. And then he adds, that *God hath manifested*

† See Dr. *Whitby* on *Tit.* i. 2, 3. See also Dr. *Bensén's* Paraphrase and Notes upon the Place.

DISCOURSE XV. 317

ted his Word through Preaching, which (saith he) is committed unto me according to the Commandment of God our Saviour. Tit. i. 2, 3. Where he intimates, that it was through the Preaching of the Gospel, that the Promise of eternal Life, which was more obscurely signified, from the most antient Times, was fully manifested to the World. This also seems to be the Design of that remarkable Passage, 2 Tim. i. 10. Where the Apostle, after having observed, that God hath saved us, and called us with an holy Calling, not according to our Works, but according to his own Purpose and Grace which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the World began, or from the Beginning of Ages (for the Phrase is the same here as in the Passage before mentioned) adds, that it is now made manifest by the Appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished Death, and hath brought Life and Immortality to Light through the Gospel. 2 Tim. i. 10. This is the Promise, saith St. John, that he hath promised us, even eternal Life. 1 John ii. 25. i. e. This is the Promise by Way of Eminency, which is now most clearly and expressly declared and published to Mankind in the Gospel Revelation.

It gives a peculiar Force to this *Promise*
that

that it is brought to us by *the Son of God*, the most illustrious Messenger that could be sent to assure us of it, and whose Divine Mission is confirmed by the most extraordinary and convincing Attestations: *This is the Record, that God hath given to us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son.* 1 John v. 11. *The only begotten of the Father, who had Glory with him before the World was, and was perfectly acquainted with his most wise and benevolent Counsels and Purposes towards Mankind, has made a fuller Declaration of the Will of God for our Salvation, than had been ever given before: And he is certainly the properest Person to bring us the clearest and most authentic Discoveries of that heavenly Felicity in all it's Excellency and Glory. He hath himself assured us that God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, viz. with a true, and living, and operative Faith, should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* John iii. 16. And, through the whole Course of his Preaching, he frequently directed Men's Hopes and Views to that *everlasting Glory and Felicity*. How encouraging is the Declaration he made to his Disciples, a little before he left our World! *Ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

DISCOURSE XV. 319

me. *In my Father's House are many Mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a Place for you; I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that, where I am, there ye may be also.* John xiv. 1, 2, 3. And what gave the most illustrious Confirmation of it was this, that, after having submitted to *Death* for our Sakes, he rose again from the Dead, and entered into the heavenly Sanctuary; by which he hath given a visible Proof and Assurance of that blessed Resurrection and immortal Life, which he promised, in the Father's Name, to all them that believe and obey him. Hence that noble Doxology of the Apostle Peter, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, to an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us.* 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

It should farther strengthen our Faith and Hope, with Respect to that future Glory, that God hath been pleased, in his great Condescension, to bring himself under the most solemn Engagements, in a Way of Covenant, to confer that Glory upon us. *The Promise of eternal Life* is not to be regarded

regarded simply as a *Promise*, which gives a mighty Weight to it; a *Promise* essentially included in that *everlasting Covenant*, of which God himself is the primary glorious Author, and his Son *Jesus Christ* is the *Mediator and Surety*, by whose *Blood* this *Covenant* is ratified. Hence he himself calls his *Blood* the *Blood of the New Testament* or *Covenant*. Matt. xxvi. 28. And the Author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* calls it *the Blood of the everlasting Covenant*. Heb. xiii. 20. And he declares that *for this Cause Christ is the Mediator of the New Testament, or Covenant, that by Means of Death—they which are called might receive the Promise of eternal Inheritance*. Heb. ix. 15. This *Covenant* was originally founded in the eternal Councils of the Divine Wisdom and Love, whereby *the Son of God* was designed to the sacred Office of *Mediator and Saviour*. In Consideration of his Undertaking and Accomplishing the great Work committed to him, and of his *Doing and Suffering* what was required of him in order to our *Redemption*, it was agreed that *perishing Sinners* of the human Race should, through his most meritorious *Obedience and Sacrifice*, obtain *the Pardon of their Sins and everlasting Salvation*, upon their hearty Compliance with the gracious Terms which it pleased

pleased the Divine Wisdom to appoint. Hence God is said to have *chosen us in Christ, before the Foundation of the World.* Eph. i. 4. and to have given his Son Power over all Flesh, that he should give eternal Life to as many as the Father had given him. John xvii. 1. 2. Accordingly our Lord seems to claim this *Glory and Happiness* for them, in Consequence of his having fulfilled the important Work which was committed to him: *I have glorified thee on the Earth, saith he to his heavenly Father: I have finished the Work which thou hast given me to do.—Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my Glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me, from before the Foundation of the World.* John xvii. 4—24. This lays a proper Foundation for his Intercession on our Behalf, and gives it a wonderful Force. We have therefore not only the *Promise of God* made to us in the Gospel Covenant, but the *Promise made to his Son in the Covenant of Redemption,* for our Security; so that, as surely as *Christ* obeyed, suffered, and died, and rose again for our *Salvation,* so surely shall they who sincerely believe and obey him be raised from the Dead, and shall obtain

tain *everlasting Life*: For what can be a more solid Security than this, that *the Promise of eternal Life* is an essential Article of that *Covenant* which was founded in God's everlasting Councils, and was *in the Fulness of Time* confirmed by the *Blood of Jesus Christ*, the great appointed *Mediator*; and which is ascertained to us not only by the *Word*, but by the *Oath* of God! So the sacred Writer to the *Hebrews* represents it: *God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the Heirs of Promise the Immutability of his Counsel, confirmed it by an Oath: That by two immutable Things, in which it was impossible for God to lye, we might have strong Consolation, who have fled for Refuge to lay Hold upon the Hope that is set before us; which Hope we have as an Anchor of the Soul both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the Vail, whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.* Heb. vi. 17—20.

Thus it appears that the *Christian's Hope* of that *future Glory* is originally established upon a solid and immovable Foundation, even upon the *Promise and Covenant of God in Jesus Christ*, which can never fail: But still

DISCOURSE XV. 323

still it remains to be inquired, what the Terms are upon our Compliance with which we may apply that *Promise* to our own Case, and take to ourselves the Comfort of it: And the Consideration of this must be reserved for another Discourse.



On Rejoicing in Hope of the Glory of God.

DISCOURSE XVI.

R O M A N S V. 2.

—*And rejoice in Hope of the Glory
of God.*

HAVING considered the Greatness and Excellency of that *future Glory* which is the great Object of the *Christian's Hope*, as also the solid Foundation of that *Hope*, as established upon the *Promise and Covenant of God through Jesus Christ*, it now remaineth that we consider upon what Grounds a good Man and sincere *Christian* may claim an Interest in that *promised Felicity*, and apply it to his own particular Case : For it is necessary that he should

be able in some Degree to do this, in order to his *Rejoicing in Hope of the Glory of God.*

And here it must be observed, that, as the *Promise* of that future *heavenly Glory* is made to us in the *Way of Covenant*, so there are *Terms* stipulated and required of us, in order to our being admitted to a *Participation* of the *promised Felicity*. Not indeed any *Thing* in a *Way* of proper *Merit* and *Equivalent*, which might tend to diminish the *Freedom* of the *Grant*; yet something in a *Way* of necessary *Qualification*, on the *Part* of those on whom it shall be conferred: For though this *eternal Life* be the *Gift of God* through *Jesus Christ our Lord*. *Rom. vi. 23.* and wholly the *Effect* of *sovereign Grace*; yet the *Wisdom* and *Righteousness* of *God*, as the *moral Governor* of the *World*, require that it should be conferred in such a *Manner* as is most becoming his own *glorious Perfections*, and agreeable to the *sacred Rules* of *eternal Order*; and therefore that it should not be conferred on all *Men* promiscuously, but on those only who should be properly qualified for obtaining and enjoying it. Accordingly it is evident from the whole *New Testament* that there are *Terms* and *Qualifications* insisted upon

upon, without which we cannot, according to the Gospel Covenant, lay Claim to the *heavenly Glory*: It therefore highly concerneth us to know what those Terms and Qualifications are. They are sometimes all summed up in one Word, *Faith* or *Believing*: Thus our Saviour declares, that *God so loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* John iii. 16. To the same Purpose we are told, that *he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting Life.* John iii. 36. We are often said *to be justified by Faith*, and *to be saved by Faith*. But then, to prevent a wrong Understanding of these Passages, there are others which insist upon the Necessity of *real Holiness and Obedience* in order to *Salvation*. Thus it is declared, that *unto them that, by a patient Continuance in Well-doing, seek for Glory, Honour, and Immortality, God will give eternal Life.* Rom. ii. 7. And that *blest are they that do his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the Gates into the City.* Rev. xxii. 14. Where it is intimated, that none have a Right to the *heavenly Glory*, but they that yield a *dutiful Obedience to God's Commandments*. The same Thing is in-

tended by that Declaration, *Heb. v. 9.* that *Christ is the Author of eternal Salvation unto all them that obey him.* And who those are that may be said *to obey him* the Apostle plainly signifies, when he tells us, that *the Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation, teacheth us, that, denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World.* *Tit. ii. 11, 12.* It is farther to be observed, that in many Passages of the sacred Writings a great Stress is laid upon *Repentance*, as absolutely necessary to our Obtaining *the Pardon of our Sins*, and having an Interest in *the promised Salvation*: And this *Repentance* includes not only a Confession of our Sins and godly Sorrow for them, but *a real Conversion*, or Turning from the Love and Practice of them to Righteousness and true Holiness. It is called *Repentance unto Salvation.* *2 Cor. vii. 10.* and *Repentance unto Life.* *Acts xi. 18.* And it is joined by *St. Paul* with *Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*, as being of equal Importance, and equally the Subject of his Preaching. *Acts xx. 21.* where he declareth, that *he testified both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.* Upon comparing these several

Passages

Passages together, to which many others might be added, it is manifest that, when *Faith* or *Believing* is represented as the Summary of what is required of us in order to *Salvation*, it is not to be understood of a mere speculative notional Assent to the Truth of the Gospel, or of a mere Reliance on *Christ* for *Salvation*, though both these are included in it; but it farther signifies a hearty and practical Compliance with the whole Method of *Salvation* held forth to us through *Jesus Christ*. It hath a Respect not only to the Doctrines and Promises, but to the Laws of the Gospel; and must be taken as in an inseparable Connection with *Repentance and holy Obedience*. Accordingly the Apostle *James* declares, that *Faith without Works is dead, being alone*. James ii. 20. And *St. Paul*, who lays such a Stress on *Divine Faith*, plainly shews what he intends by it, when he saith, that *in Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth any Thing, nor Uncircumcision, but Faith which worketh by Love*. Gal. v. 6. Or, as he elsewhere expresseth it, *Circumcision is nothing, and Uncircumcision is nothing, but the Keeping the Commandments of God*. 1 Cor. vii. 19.

It appears then, with great Evidence, that a *sincere and dutiful Obedience*, or real
Holiness

Holiness of Heart and Life, is necessary to our attaining to a well-grounded *Hope of the future Glory*. It is necessary by the Appointment of God, and the Constitution of the Gospel *Covenant*, and it is necessary in the Nature of the Thing; because, without this, we cannot be properly qualified for the Enjoyment of that *heavenly Felicity*, which by the Account given of it is a State of perfect Holiness, Goodness, and Purity.

For any Persons therefore to pretend to *hope for the promised eternal Salvation*, whilst they indulge themselves in known presumptuous Sin and Disobedience, and take no Care to *order their Conversation aright*, according to the Laws of the Gospel, is not a true *Christian Hope*, but a vain and unwarrantable Presumption: It is *the Hope of the Hypocrite*, which, we are told, *shall perish*, and which is likened to a *Spider's Web*, that shall be soon swept away and destroyed. *Job viii. 13, 14.* And, on the other Hand, the Man that *heartily repenteth* him of his past Sins, and *herein exerciseth himself to keep a Conscience void of Offence both towards God and towards Man, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World*; and who, at the same Time, from a humbling Sense of his own manifold

DISCOURSE XVI. 331

manifold Failures and Defects, placeth his whole Confidence, not in his own Merits or Righteousness, but in the free and sovereign Grace of God through *Jesus Christ*, the great appointed Mediator and Saviour; such a Person may upon good Grounds apply the Gospel *Promises* of that *future Glory* to his own Case, and may lay Hold on the Hope that is set before him. And, the more he abounds in *the Fruits of the Spirit*, and in the Exercise of the *Christian* Graces and Virtues, in Purity, Humility, Temperance, Patience, and especially in Love to God and *Jesus Christ*, and Charity towards Mankind, the more lively and vigorous may his *Hope* justly be. Thus, as he *groweth in Grace*, his *Hope* will also grow and gather Strength; and this, instead of rendering him negligent and remiss, will greatly animate him in his Duty: For every Man that hath this Hope in him purifieth himself even as Christ is pure. 1 John iii. 3. And, when this *Divine Hope* is thus enlarged, and every Virtue along with it, the *Christian* is made more and more meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. He hath in some Measure that *eternal Life* begun in him here on Earth, the Earnest and First-Fruits of that *future Glory*: And they that have these

332 DISCOURSE XVI.

these *First-Fruits* may, with a *joyful Expectation*, wait for the *Adoption*, to wit, the *Redemption of the Body*, when their *Happiness* shall be completed. *Rom. viii. 23.*

This is the regular Way in which we may reasonably expect to have our *Hope* increased and established, *viz. by a diligent and patient Continuance in Well-doing*, and endeavouring to make a constant Progress in *Holiness and Virtue*, and to get our Souls more and more formed into a godlike and heavenly Temper: It is in this Way that the best of Men in all Ages have attained to a comfortable *Hope* of eternal Salvation, and some of them to what is called a *full Assurance of Hope*. *Heb. vi. 11.* St. Paul declares concerning himself, *I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith. Henceforth is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that Day.* *2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.* And again, *Our Rejoicing is this, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our Conversation in the World.* *2 Cor. i. 12.* His Rejoicing arose from a *conscious Sincerity*, and the inward Witness in his own Breast, concerning

DISCOURSE XVI. 333

ning his having acted up to the *Christian* Character in the Course of a holy and useful Life.

And, when to this inward Testimony of a good Conscience are added the sacred *Consolations of God's holy Spirit*, this tends mightily to heighten the good Man's *Hope* and render it complete. Remarkable to this Purpose is that Passage of the Apostle, *Rom. viii. 16, 17. The Spirit itself beareth Witness with our Spirits, that we are the Children of God; and, if Children, then Heirs; Heirs of God, and Joint-heirs with Christ; Heirs, as he elsewhere expresseth it, according to the Hope of eternal Life. Tit. iii. 7.* The good Spirit of God, by his Divine Influence, gives a farther Light and Force to the Testimony of our own self-approving Minds: To his gracious Assurances we must ascribe it, that those holy Affections and godlike Dispositions are strengthened and enlarged in us, and carried forth into a vigorous Exercise; which are the Characters and Evidences of our *Sonship*. It is by the Holy Ghost that *the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts*, in the delightful Sense of it. *Rom. v. 5.* And this tends to dispel those Jealousies and Fears which might otherwise be apt to arise in the Minds of sincere
Chri-

Christians themselves. Accordingly St. Paul prays for the *Believers* to whom he writes, that *the God of Hope* would fill them with Joy and Peace in believing, that they might abound in Hope through the Power of the Holy Ghost. Rom. xv. 13. It is because God by his Spirit is the glorious Author of this *Hope*, that the Apostle there calls him *the God of Hope*; and he elsewhere observes that God even our Father hath given us everlasting Consolation and good Hope through Grace. 2 Theff. ii. 16. And it is agreeable to the best Notions we can form of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness to believe that God is ready to grant *needful Assurances and Consolations* to good and upright Souls, for carrying them on with Constancy and Alacrity in his Service, amidst the many Difficulties and Temptations of this present State; especially considering, that these *Assurances* are communicated in such a Way as is perfectly consistent with free Agency and the just Order of our Faculties, and so as not to hinder or supersede, but rather to befriend and help forward, the Operations of our own Minds.

And now our Way is clear to what I proposed, in the last Place, to consider, viz. the Joy arising from this *Hope*. We rejoice,

rejoice, saith the Apostle here, *in Hope of the Glory of God*; and in several other Passages of Scripture it is plainly signified, that there is a very close Connection between this *Divine Hope and Joy*. *Christians* are represented as *rejoicing in Hope, patient in Tribulation*. Rom. xii. 12. And it is mentioned as their Duty, as well as Privilege, *to hold fast the Confidence, and rejoicing in the Hope firm unto the End*. Heb. iii. 6. And indeed it is evident, that the *Hope* here referred to must, in the Nature of Things, tend to produce and promote a sacred *Joy*. *Hope* in general is a delightful Affection, and in some Measure anticipates the Possession and Enjoyment of the Good *hoped for*; and, the greater and more excellent the Thing *hoped for* is, the *Joy*, arising from the *Hope* of obtaining it, will be proportionably of a higher and nobler Kind. Since therefore that *future eternal Glory and Felicity* infinitely transcendeth whatsoever Enjoyments this Earth can afford, the *Joy* which the *Hope* of it createth in the Soul must be far superior to that which resulteth from any worldly *Hopes* or *Expectations*. St. Peter emphatically styles it *a Joy unspeakable and full of Glory*, or, as the Words might literally be rendered, *a Joy unspeakable and glorified*;

a Joy

a *Joy* by which we are in some Measure made *Partakers* of the *heavenly Glory*. 1. Pet. i. 8. It is true that the *Joy* which is caused by worldly Objects and Enjoyments may strike more forcibly upon the Imagination, and make more lively Impressions for a While, as it ariseth from Things present and sensible; but it is a tumultuous *Joy*, evanid and transitory, and is justly compared by the wise Man *to the Crackling of Thorns under a Pot*. Eccles. vii. 6. The Things which are the Objects of worldly *Hope and Joy* are fading and unsatisfying in their Nature, greater in Expectation than in Possession; so that the very Enjoyment disappoints: But the *Joy* we are now speaking of is of a more stable and permanent, as well as of a more spiritual and refined Nature. It is not a mere sudden Transport, which, like a transient Blaze, is soon over; nor is it seated merely in the Passions, or the Product of a warm Imagination; but it is a solid substantial Thing, deeply fixed in the Heart. It hath been already observed, that the *Christian's Hope* ordinarily proceedeth by gradual Advances, according to the Progress we make in the *Christian Virtues* and in the *Divine Life*: In like Manner the *Joy* which ariseth from this

Hope

DISCOURSE XVI. 337

Hope must ordinarily be expected to be gradually progressive, not complete at once, but enlarging and heightening by Degrees, till it becomes in some Measure the habitual settled Temper of the Soul, and produceth an abiding Peace there. Hence, in the Passage mentioned before, *Joy and Peace* are joined together: *The God of Hope fill you with Joy and Peace in Believing.* Rom. xv. 13.

From the Account which hath been given of this Evangelical *Hope*, the solid Foundation upon which it is established, and the spiritual *Joy* which resulteth from it, it is manifest that it must needs have a great Tendency to promote our Happiness, even in this present State: It is in some Measure *the Beginning, the Earnest, of Heaven, and a Foretaste* of those pure and satisfying Pleasures which are at God's right Hand for evermore. When the *Christian* hath this *Hope* in him, who can describe the blessed Temper of his Soul! That *Peace of God which passeth all Understanding keeps his Heart and Mind in Christ Jesus.* He enjoys a Divine Satisfaction and Complacency which no Affluence of worldly Riches, no Splendor of Titles and Dignities, no sensual Pleasures and Gratifications can furnish: If weighed in the Balance against *all the King-*

doms of this World and the Glory of them, they would be found light and vain in the Comparifon.

And, as this Divine *Hope* and *Joy* is happy and delightful in itfelf, fo it is very beneficial in it's Confequences, and produceth the moft excellent Effects: It *purifieth the Heart*, and engageth us to *cleanfe ourfelves from all Filthinefs of Flefh and Spirit*. It is the moft effectual Prefervative againft the Influence of vicious Affections, and corrupt Lufts, and the fatal Allurements of thofe fenfual Pleafures which captivate the Soul, and fubject Reason to flefhly Appetites: It animates our Obedience, and caugeth us *to run the Way of God's Commandments* with Vigour and Delight, and lays a proper Foundation for a true Greatnefs and Noblenefs of Spirit. As far as any Man is under the Influence of it, he is infpired with a generous Difdain of every Thing that is bafe and falfe, fordid and impure. None of thofe *Pleafures of Sin* which are *but for a Season* will be able to entice him, who hath his *Hopes and Views* fixed on that *Fulnefs of Joy* which is in *God's immediate Prefence above*. No Profpert of worldly Riches will bribe that Man from his Duty who looketh forward with a *ftedfaft Hope* to the *durable Riches and Rightcoufnefs, the*
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incorruptible heavenly Treasures which God hath prepared for them that love and obey him : Nor will all the Glories which flatter the Ambition of vain Men have much Influence upon him who seeketh for a superior *Glory, Honour, and Immortality in the highest Heavens.* Far from envying the Men of this World who have their Portion in this Life, he disdaineth to take up with so mean an Happiness : He hath a Soul above these worldly Advantages : For he extends his Prospects to *Eternity*, reaching forth with noble and vigorous Aspirations after a nearer Conformity to God, the supreme original Excellence ; and after the *eternal* Enjoyment of his beatific Presence and Love. Such are the natural and happy Effects of this *Hope of the Glory of God*, and the *Joy* resulting from it, when it possesseth the Heart and reigneth there.

To this it may be added, that this *Divine Hope and Joy* will be more effectual, than any Thing else can be, to support us under all the *Tribulations* of this present State : Accordingly the Apostle here, after having said, *We rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God*, immediately adds, *And not only so, but we glory in Tribulation also.* The Word in the Original, here rendered *glory*, is the same that was just before rendered *rejoice* ; and it

properly signifies *an exulting and triumphant Joy*. Others may in some Measure bear up under *Afflictions*, but the true *Christian* alone, who is animated with this *blessed Hope*, hath just Grounds of *Rejoicing* in them: For he is assured that *this light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*. 2 Cor. iv. 17. Hence St. Peter, speaking of that *eternal Salvation* which is proposed to us in the Gospel as the great Object of our *Hope*, expresseth himself thus: *Wherein, i. e. in Hope or Expectation of which Salvation ye greatly rejoice, though now, for a Season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold Temptations*. 1 Pet. i. 6. It is observed concerning the *Hebrews* that, *when they endured a great Fight of Afflictions, and were made a Gazing-Stock both by Afflictions and Reproaches, they took joyfully the Spoiling of their Goods, knowing in themselves, that in Heaven they had a better and more enduring Substance*. Heb. x. 32, 33, 34. Animated by this *Divine Hope*, the Apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer *Shame for the Name of Christ*. Acts. v. 41. And when Paul and Silas had many *Stripes laid upon them by the Command of the Magistrates of Phippi*, and were thrust into the inner Pri-

DISCOURSE XVI. 341

Prison, and their Feet made fast in the Stocks; their Hearts were so filled with a Divine Joy, that they made the Dungeon re-found with Songs of Praise. ACTS xvi. 24, 25.

But that which especially shews the great Advantage of this Divine *Hope*, and the *Joy* which springeth from it, is, that it is capable of yielding strong Consolations and Supports against *the Fears of Death itself*: For *the Righteous hath Hope in his Death.* Prov. xiv. 32. In that awful Moment, when Nature is sinking in all it's Powers, this *Hope* scattereth the Clouds and Darkness which seem then to cover the Face of Things, and opens a bright and glorious Scene. *Death* then appears not merely as putting a Period to this present Life, but as an Introduction to *a happy Immortality.* Bad Men may, by the Force of natural Courage, or what is called *a Principle of Honour*, or under the Influence of some strong Passion, or perhaps in Consequence of their having wrought themselves up to a great Degree of Hardness and obstinate Infidelity, outbrave *Death*, and seem to meet it without Terror; but they cannot be said to *have Hope in their Death*: And, if Conscience be awakened on a *Dying-bed*, the Apprehension of *future Punishments* for a

past wicked Life, which sometimes comes with great Force even upon the most hardened Sinners, whether they will or no, causeth such Pangs and Agonies of Soul as no bodily Pains or Tortures can equal, and which a wise Man would not undergo for all the Pleasures of a vicious Life. It is Religion alone that can inable a Man both to live well, and to die safely and comfortably. Many Instances there have been of Persons who through the *Hopes* of the Gospel have *rejoiced in Death*, and *triumphed* over it: Under the Languishings of a weak and dying Body, *when Flesh and Heart were ready to fail them*, they have had some *joyful Prelibations of the Glory* prepared for them, or at least have been inabled, with a firm Confidence, and in peaceful Tranquillity, to *commit their departing Spirits to their most merciful heavenly Father, and to the Saviour who died for them, and rose again*. Happy those who, when they see their *Dissolution* approaching, can upon good Grounds say with a *Divine Faith and Hope*, *O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory? The Sting of Death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law: But Thanks be to God, which giveth us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*
 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57, 58.

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I would conclude with exhorting you to labour to get this *Hope of the Glory of God*, which is the proper Foundation of spiritual *Joy*, more confirmed and established. This *Hope* and *Joy* is far from being equal in all *Christians*: It admits of various Degrees, and in some good Minds is comparatively weak and low. This, when it is not owing to the Prevalency of a melancholy Temper and Constitution, is to be charged either upon their not having right Notions of the Nature and gracious Terms of the Gospel-Covenant, or upon their not taking due Care by a diligent Use of all proper Means to keep their *Hope* strong and vigorous: And this is certainly a very culpable Neglect. It is the Duty of every true *Christian* to do what he can to get his Doubts and Fears dispelled, and to entertain large and worthy Apprehensions of the free and sovereign Grace and Goodness of God in *Jesus Christ*. It is an uncomfortable and unnatural State to live in an anxious Suspense of Mind, with regard to a Matter of such vast Consequence as our Title to *eternal Salvation*: We should labour therefore to get out of this Perplexity, and not rest contented till, by a *lively Faith*, by *fervent Prayer*, by the frequent Exercise of the *Christian Virtues*, by *abounding in the Fruits of the Spirit*, and endeavouring to get our Souls

344 DISCOURSE XVI.

formed into a greater *Meetness for Heaven*; we have our *Hope* more and more strengthened and enlarged, so as to lay a solid Foundation for an inward Peace and Satisfaction of Mind. And we must take particular Care to guard against every Thing that is inconsistent with this *Divine Hope*, and especially against Indulging ourselves in the Practice of *wilful presumptuous Sin*: For every such Sin will make an unhappy Breach upon our *Hope* and *Joy*, which cannot be repaired till we are effectually recovered from it by a *sincere Repentance and new Obedience*. Let us therefore *lay aside every Weight, and the Sin that doth so easily beset us*; and *let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith*: Forgetting those Things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those Things which are before, let us press towards the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Jesus Christ: And may the God of all Grace, who hath called us unto his eternal Glory by Christ Jesus, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be Glory and Dominion for ever. Amen.

Prejudices

*Prejudices against Religion removed, and the
Practice of Piety and Virtue recommended,
as the highest Pleasure and Delight.*

DISCOURSE XVII.

PROVERBS iii. 17.

*Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all
her Paths are Peace.*

STRONG and powerful are the Charms of *Pleasure*: It draweth us with a mighty Force, which we are scarce able to resist: Nor is this to be wondered at, since *Pleasure*, or *Delight*, taken in it's just Extent, is only another Word for *Happiness*. But it generally happens, that Men are very wrong in their Notions and Pursuits of *Pleasure*, and in the Methods they take to obtain it: They place it in improper Objects,

jects, and *seek it where it is not to be found*; or they take up with low mean *Pleasures*, which are beneath the Dignity of the rational Nature. To say that *Pleasure is to be found in a Life of Piety and Virtue* is, in the Opinion of the World, a strange Paradox; and yet, if the Matter be impartially considered, it is what right Reason must approve as a certain and important Truth. To set this in a proper Light is the Design I have been carrying on in a Series of Discourses, in which I have taken a large Compass: And the just Conclusion to be drawn from the Whole may be very fitly expressed in these Words of *Solomon*, when, speaking of *Wisdom*, by which he understands *true Religion and Virtue*, he declareth, that *her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace*.

It may not be amiss, on this Occasion, to recollect the principal Things which have been insisted upon in the Prosecution of this Subject.

It hath been shewn, that the Objects which *Religion* proposes to our Contemplation are the most sublime and excellent, capable of filling the Soul with a pure and exalted *Pleasure; Knowledge*, especially, when exercised on Things of a great and glorious Nature, affords a noble and rational Entertainment,

tainment, far superior to the Pleasures of Sense. And, of all *Knowledge*, that which *true Religion* furnisheth us with is both of the greatest Dignity in itself, and of the greatest Use and Importance to us. We are thereby brought to an Acquaintance with the noblest Objects which can possibly be presented to the human Mind. It leadeth us to the *Knowledge* and *Contemplation* of God himself, and his incomparable Attributes and Perfections: It directs us to observe and admire the Characters of his *Glory* in his wonderful Works of Creation, and in the Methods of his most wise, benign, and righteous Providence: To which it must be added, that it discloseth to us *a most glorious and ravishing Scene in the Redemption of Mankind by Jesus Christ*, in which the Wisdom and Holiness, as well as Grace and Goodness of God, is most illustriously displayed. These Things, when duly realised to the Mind, have a manifest Tendency to fill it with a devout *Admiration, Love, and Joy*. What a Source of *divine Satisfaction* is here opened to the Soul, if duly improved! And what Enemies are they to their own *Joy*, who seldom turn their Thoughts to those *glorious and most interesting* Subjects, whilst they suffer their Minds to be taken up with mere *Trifles and Vanities*,

Vanities, or at least with Things which are comparatively of small Worth and Importance!

And as *Religion* leads us to the *Knowledge* of the most excellent Things, the Contemplation of which is delightful to a well-disposed Mind; so the Course of Action which it prescribes, and to engage us to which is the great Design of *religious Faith and Knowledge*, hath a Tendency, in the Nature of Things, to promote our true Perfection and Happiness. This is what I have endeavoured to shew by a distinct Consideration of the Duties required of us in the Divine Law, relating to *God*, our *Neighbour*, and *ourselves*. What a noble *Satisfaction* must it yield to live in the habitual Exercise of a sincere vital *Piety*, and to maintain a sacred Intercourse and Communication with God our *heavenly Father* through *Jesus Christ* by a pure Adoration and Devotion, by holy Love, a profound and filial Reverence, meek Resignation, and steady Dependence! To be *just and generously honest* in our Dealings towards our Fellow-creatures, to endeavour to *render unto all their Dues*, and to lay ourselves out in *doing Good to Mankind*, and promoting their Happiness by all the kind Offices in our Power! And, with Regard to the *Government of ourselves*, to keep our Appetites
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DISCOURSE XVII. 349

and Passions within the Bounds of a just Moderation, to be sober and chaste, patient and contented, raised above every Thing sordid and low, vicious and impure, and formed to a Divine and heavenly Temper! And, finally, to abound in the uniform harmonious Exercise of those *Christian* Virtues which are represented by the Apostle as *the Fruits of the Spirit*, such as *Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance!* What is there in these Dispositions, and the Acts that flow from them, but what is excellent and amiable, improving and delightful to the reasonable Nature? They tend to procure a Man a fair and lovely Reputation and Character, which cannot but be grateful to a generous Spirit: And, which is of greater Consequence, a holy and virtuous Temper and Conduct is attended with the Approbation of a Man's own Mind, and naturally produceth *an inward Complacency and Satisfaction*, which none can be fully sensible of, but the Person that feeleth it. It is the Observation of the wise Man, that *the good Man shall be satisfied from himself.* Prov. xiv. 14. His *Satisfaction and Joy* is not principally derived from Things without him, from worldly Advantages and the Applause of Men: He has an *inward* Fund of Happiness,

pineness in his own Breast. The pious and virtuous Affections and Dispositions of his Soul, and the good Actions he performs, are attended, in the very Exercise of them, with *a conscious Satisfaction* which gladdens the Heart; and they also administer solid Comfort to him upon the Reflection, as having acted in a Manner worthy of the rational Nature, and becoming the Obligations he is under. But that which is the chief Source of the *inward Satisfaction* which a good Man enjoys is the Sense he hath of the Divine Approbation: That he is engaged in a Course of Action which is pleasing to the Best of Beings, the truest Judge of Excellency, whose Favour and Approbation is of infinitely greater Consequence to us than the Applause of a whole World: *Thou, Lord, wilt bless the Righteous* (saith the Psalmist) *with Favour wilt thou compass him as with a Shield.* Pf v. 12.

To these Considerations it may be added, that *true Religion* sweetens Prosperity. It both helpeth us to the proper Relish and Enjoyment of temporal Blessings, by enabling us to receive and enjoy them as the *Gifts of God* with Cheerfulness and Innocence, and with a thankful Sense of the Divine Goodness; and it directeth and assisteth us to make a right Use and Improvement

ment of them. And, on the other Hand, it furnisheth the most effectual Consolations and Supports under the Troubles and Adversities to which we are now exposed, and thus lays a Foundation for Happiness, as far as it is attainable here on Earth, in every Condition and Circumstance of Life.

The last Thing, which was observed, was, that *Religion* raiseth us to the most sublime and glorious *Hopes*: It opens the most ravishing and blisful Prospects, which tend to spread a sacred *Joy and Satisfaction* through all our Powers. And in this the Condition of a truly pious and virtuous Person is vastly preferable to that of the most prosperous wicked Man upon Earth: His Views are not confined within the narrow Limits of this present State, but extend even to *Eternity*: He can upon solid Grounds *rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God*. In Proportion as this *Hope* prevaieth, he hath *Heaven* brought down to him in some happy *Beginnings* here on Earth: And, when he is called to resign this mortal Life, his *Hope is full of Immortality*, and he can carry his Views beyond *the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death* to a World of *everlasting Light and Joy*.

The several Things, which have been mentioned, taken together, may be sufficient

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352 DISCOURSE XVII.

to satisfy every impartial thinking Mind, that it is not without great Reason that it is pronounced concerning *Divine Wisdom*, or *true practical Religion*, that *her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.*

But to all this it may be objected, that the Practice of Piety and Virtue, however pleasing and beautiful in Idea, is in Fact *unpleasant* and *disagreeable* to the greatest Part of Mankind: That many of the Duties required in the Divine Law, such as *Self-denial*, and *the Mortification of our Appetites and Passions*, are inconsistent with *Pleasure* and destructive of it. That *Repentance*, which is the first necessary Step to a religious Life, often causeth bitter Pangs and Sorrow. And not only is the *Christian Life difficult* in the first Entrance upon it, but it is all along *uneasy and troublesome*: It requireth a constant Watchfulness, and a strict Discipline to be exercised over the Heart and the Affections. It is represented in Scripture under the Notion of *a Race*, which is a very laborious Exercise; and of *a Warfare*, in which we are to carry on *a continual Conflict* against our spiritual Enemies, and against the Temptations of the Flesh and of the World. Add to all this, that many Persons, whom it were the Height of Uncharitableness

ritableness not to think sincerely religious, have spent their Days in *Sorrow and Sadness*, filled with disconsolate Jealousies and Fears, which have *marred* all the *Pleasures* of Life.

Such as these are the Prejudices which frequently create in Men's Minds an Aversion to *Religion*, and discourage them from embracing it. But it is no hard Matter to shew, that, notwithstanding all this, the Observation still holdeth good, that *the Ways of true Religion are Ways of Pleasantness*, and that a virtuous and godly Life, even in this present State, and with *all the Inconveniencies and Troubles* that may attend it, is vastly superior to a Life of Sin and Vice, in the *real Satisfaction and Pleasure* which it yields.

More particularly to take off the Force of these Objections, I would offer the following Things to be considered

First, *The Difficulty and Trouble*, which attendeth the Practice of *Religion*, doth not arise from *Religion* itself, or any Thing in it's own Nature that is *harsh and disagreeable*; but it is wholly owing to the Indisposedness and Corruption of Men's own Hearts. It is no just Objection against *Religion and Virtue*, that those who are under the Power of vicious Habits and irregular Appetites find

no Pleasure in the Practice of it: For in this Case the Fault is not to be charged upon *Religion*, but upon the Depravedness of their own Taste and Inclinations. The most beautiful Colours cannot charm the Eye, when it is covered with Film, or obstructed with Rheum. Food may be *very pleasant* to the Taste, though a vitiated Palate cannot relish it: Nor is Religion the less divine and excellent in itself, because it gives *no Pleasure* to an impure and unholy Soul. The just Conclusion to be drawn from this is, not that *a Life of true Piety and Virtue* is not, in itself, *pleasant and delightful*, but that, in order to our having a just Relish of its *Divine Pleasures and Satisfaction*s, we must labour to get our *Hearts purified*, and a happy Change wrought in the Temper of our Minds. And we have great Encouragement to attempt it: For *Virtue and Holiness* is suited to the original Disposition and Constitution of the human Mind, when it is not perverted and depraved by sensual and vicious Affections and evil Habits. It was observed, in entering upon this Subject, that, as we are reasonable Creatures, moral Agents, there are Means to be used for rectifying and improving our moral Sense and Taste of Things: In order to which, we should often consider the Beauty and Excellency of
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real Holiness and Virtue, the Goodness and Reasonableness of the Divine Commands, and the Tendency they have to promote the true Happiness and Perfection of our Nature : And what hath been largely offered in the foregoing Discourses may furnish useful Reflections to this Purpose. Frequently to turn our Thoughts and Views this Way hath a natural Tendency to remove our Prejudices, and bring us to an inward Conviction and Sensation of the *Pleasantness of the Ways of Religion*, as being agreeable to the best and noblest Principles of the human Frame. And as we must exert our utmost Endeavours in the Exercise of our own rational and moral Powers, and in the Use of all proper Means of Self-improvement ; so we must, from a Sense of our Weakness and Insufficiency in ourselves, apply to God by humble and fervent Prayer for the Influences of his Holy Spirit ; that he would be graciously pleased to *create in us clean Hearts, and renew right Spirits within us* ; that he would enable us to *discern the Things which are excellent*, and heal the Disaffection of *the carnal Mind* in us ; and that he would form us to such a Divine Temper and Disposition of Soul, that we may be fitted for *Delighting in Holiness and Virtue*, and may feel the Power

of it's sacred Charms. And there is great Reason to hope, that God will have a gracious Regard to these our humble Requests, when attended with diligent Endeavours on our Parts: Nothing can be more encouraging to this Purpose, than that remarkable Declaration of our blessed Saviour: *If ye, being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Luke xi.

13.

But, Secondly, Let it be farther observed, that even those Duties, which seem *most difficult* in Religion, and to which we are apt to have the greatest Aversion, are, if rightly understood, not only highly rational, but lay a Foundation for *the truest Pleasure and Satisfaction of Mind*. Such particularly is the *Mortification of our corrupt Appetites and Passions*, the Reasonableness and Necessity of which, to our own Happiness, I had Occasion to take Notice of before. It must indeed be acknowledged to be a *difficult* Work: But we often represent the *Difficulty* to ourselves much greater than it really is, as if it were in vain to struggle against inveterate evil Habits. When we heartily set about it, we shall find that the *Difficulty* is far from being

ing insuperable, especially considering that there are gracious Assistances provided, which God hath been pleased to promise for our Encouragement, and which he is ever ready to communicate for helping our sincere Endeavours, and carrying us on in the Performance of our Duty amidst the many *Difficulties and Temptations* which now lie in our Way.

Whatever Pains it may cost us to correct and subdue evil Habits, it may be truly said, that the Man who setteth himself to *mortify his vicious Lusts* hath more of a real and rational Self-enjoyment, than he that indulgeth and gratifieth them: For he only controuleteth the *Flesh*, his more base and brutish Part, in order to exalt the nobler Part of his Nature; by *denying* his own *corrupt Self-will*, he throws himself into the Bosom of the supreme Good, in whom he may *securely and delightfully* acquiesce. How *uneasy and disagreeable* soever the Work of *Repentance*, and the *Sorrow* which accompanies it, may appear to be (though that *Sorrow* is not properly chargeable on *Religion*, but upon our own *evil Ways*, the natural Effect of which, when duly reflected upon, is *Sorrow and Remorse*) yet certain it is that *the Repenting of and Forsaking our Sins* afford-

eth more of a solid and noble *Satisfaction*, than a *presumptuous* Persisting in them. An ingenuous *Contrition* has a Kind of *pleasing* Sensation attending it, *whereby the Heart is made better*, and which is far preferable to the Excesses of carnal Jollitry. The Soul by *Repentance* disburthens itself of it's Load of Guilt, and is restored to a right Temper: It *returneth from the Ways of Sin and Folly to the Father of Mercies and God of Love*, and endeavoureth to unite itself to the infinite Good, which must needs lay the Foundation for an inward Tranquillity and serene Temper of Mind.

Add to this, Thirdly, That *the chief Difficulty* in breaking off from our evil Courses, and applying ourselves in good Earnest to the Practice of Piety and Virtue, is at the Beginning; and, in Proportion to the Advances we make in it, the *easier* and *pleasanter* it will grow. It is an old and good Rule verified by Observation and Experience, *Chuse that which is best, and Use will make it pleasant*. When true Religion and Virtue is become habitual, which it will be by frequent Exercise; and holy good Affections and Dispositions are strengthened and improved; we shall be fitted for relishing more of the *Pleasures* of a holy and virtuous Life. And though there
there

there will be a constant Care and Vigilance necessary, whilst we are in the Body; and a *Conflict* must be carried on against the Remainders of Corruption within us, and against the Temptations and Assaults of our spiritual Enemies; yet a steady Perseverance and Proficiency in the Ways of Holiness will ordinarily be attended with a *growing Satisfaction*. And, if we be called to undergo extraordinary Trials, as in Time of Persecution, when we may be obliged to abandon our worldly Possessions and Enjoyments, and even to *lay down our Lives for the Sake of Truth and a good Conscience*, we may upon just Grounds expect extraordinary Assurances and Supports. Such outward Evils and Sufferings for the *Cause of Religion and Righteousness*, which is the *Cause of God*, shall be abundantly compensated by the *peaceful Reflections* of our own Minds, by the *Joy of the Holy Ghost*, and by the *Hope* of that eminent Degree of *Glory and Felicity in the heavenly World*, which is prepared for all those who give this remarkable Proof of the Sincerity and Prevalency of their Faith, their Love, and Obedience.

As to the Objection drawn from the *sad and uncomfortable Lives* of many seemingly

pious Persons, it is certain, that this is not properly owing to *Religion itself*, but generally to Faults or Mistakes in those that profess it : Either it is owing to their not considering with a due Attention of Mind the *glorious* and *delightful* Objects which are set before us in the Gospel ; or to their being too much under the Power of a worldly Frame and Spirit, which both indisposeth them for relishing *the Joys of Religion*, and subjecteth them to many Anxieties and Vexations ; or it is to be ascribed to their Negligence in the Duties required of them, and to their not having been so uniform and circumspect in their *Christian Course*, as they might and ought to have been ; which may provoke God, in just Displeasure, to *with-hold from them the Light of his Countenance, and the Consolations of his Spirit* ; and in all these Cases, if they do not experience much of *the Comforts of Religion*, it is to be charged upon their not walking according to it's sacred Rules : Or, perhaps, they are of a melancholy Disposition, which casteth a black and dismal Hue upon every Thing : And shall *Religion* be blamed for that which is the Effect of bodily Constitution, or the Power of Disease ? Or their Fears and Jealousies may be owing to mistaken

Notions

Notions of *Religion*, and to Misapprehensions of the Nature and gracious Terms of *the Gospel Covenant*: And the proper Remedy is, not to cast off Religion and the Practice of it, which would make the Case infinitely worse; but to get our Consciences rightly informed as to the Terms of our Acceptance with God, and the exceeding Riches of his Grace towards us through *Jesus Christ*; and at the same Time to be diligent and circumspect in a Life of holy Obedience. Nothing truly valuable can be obtained without Application and Diligence. A glorious Prize is set before us, consummate Virtue and Happiness; the Prospect of which, though attended with *Difficulty*, hath a Tendency to carry us on with *Cheerfulness* in the Way of our Duty, and to *sweeten* all our Labours and Services; and, when this State of Trial and Temptation is over, and we are freed from all the Troubles and Infirmities of this mortal Life, *perfect Holiness* will be *perfect eternal Joy and Glory*.

Thus we have endeavoured to obviate and remove the Prejudices which many are apt to entertain against *a godly and virtuous Life*, as if it were inconsistent with *true Pleasure and Enjoyment*. It appears that there is no just Foundation for those
Prejudices;

362 DISCOURSE XVII.

Prejudices ; and that it highly concerneth us to apply ourselves in good Earnest to the Practice of Righteousness and true Holiness, if we would shew that we have a proper and consistent Regard to the Securing and Promoting our real Happiness here and hereafter.



*Prejudices against Religion removed, and the
Practice of Piety and Virtue recommended,
as the highest Pleasure and Delight.*

DISCOURSE XVIII.

PROVERBS iii. 17.

*Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness and all
her Paths are Peace.*

OUR Lord *Jesus Christ*, who hath instructed us to form the justest Notions of *Religion*, hath observed that *strait is the Gate and narrow is the Way that leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it.* Matt. vii. 14. This may, at first View, seem not to be very consistent with what the wise Man here declares, that *the Ways of Wisdom*, by which he understands *true Religion and Virtue*, are *Ways of Pleasantness*: But if the Matter be rightly considered,

considered, it will appear that there is a perfect Harmony between them. When the wise Man speaks of *the Pleasantness of the Ways of Religion*, or of a *Life of Virtue and Holiness*, he doth not intend to signify that it hath *no Trouble or Difficulty* attending it, but that, notwithstanding this, it hath a Tendency to make us *happy*, as far as *Happiness* is attainable here on Earth, and brings the *truest Pleasure and Satisfaction* along with it. And, on the other Hand, when our Saviour speaks of *the Way of Piety and Virtue as strait and narrow*, his Design is only to represent *the Difficulties and Discouragements* attending it in the present corrupt State of Mankind, and the vicious Prejudices in the Hearts of Sinners which are apt to render them averse to the Practice of it: But it is by no Means his Intention to deny *the real Satisfaction and Comfort* which is to be found in a holy and virtuous Course, and which is vastly preferable to *the vain and unsatisfying Pleasures* of Vice and Sin. He begins his admirable *Sermon on the Mount*, in which he hath given the most excellent Precepts and Directions for a holy Life, and hath carried *pure Religion and Virtue* to the noblest Height, with pronouncing those to be *blessed* or *happy* Persons who

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DISCOURSE XVIII. 365

conduct themselves by it's sacred Rules : He particularly mentions *the Poor in Spirit*, i. e. *the Humble*, and those who have their Hearts weaned from the Love of worldly Riches ; *them that mourn viz. after a godly Sort ; the Meek, the Merciful, the Peace-makers, those that hunger and thirst after Righteousness, the Pure in Heart, and them that are persecuted for Righteousness Sake.* The World may look upon such Persons to be *unhappy* ; but he exhorts them *to rejoice and be exceeding glad*, even when exposed to the most grievous Sufferings and Reproaches for his Name's Sake : And, if *Religion* can furnish Matter of *Joy* even under such *severe Trials*, we may justly conclude, that a Life spent under it's Influence is really productive of the *truest Satisfaction and Delight*.

It appears, then, that, notwithstanding all the *Difficulties* good Men may meet with in a religious and virtuous Course, and on the Account of which our Saviour represents *the Way to Life as strait and narrow*, yet to those whose Taste is not vitiated, and who are capable of *discerning the Things that are excellent*, the Practice of *Religion and Righteousness* is fitted to yield the most sincere and solid *Satisfaction* and rational *Delight*.

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If we should pursue the Inquiry after *Pleasure* as *Job* doth after *Wisdom*, *Where shall Pleasure be found, and where is the Place of Joy and Happiness?* Is it to be found in a large Affluence of worldly Riches, or in the Splendor of Titles and Dignities, and the noisy Pomp of the Ambitious? Or shall we look for it in riotous Excesses, in the Gratifications of the voluptuous Sensualist, or in the impious Jest and Mirth of the Profane? Reason and the Experience of all Ages shew that these Things are incapable of yielding a true and lasting Satisfaction, and that no Persons are usually farther from *Happiness* and *real Self-enjoyment* than they who look for *Pleasure* in such Things as these. As it is said concerning *Wisdom*; *The Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom; and to depart from Evil is Understanding.* Job xxviii. 28. So it may, with equal Justice and Propriety, be said, that *to love and serve God is Pleasure, and to depart from Vice, and to go on in the Paths of Religion and Virtue, is true Happiness.* God is the proper Source of *Happiness* to reasonable Beings. From him it originally flows, and on him it intirely depends: And therefore *the noblest Pleasure* is to be found in *Religion*, which is the Knowledge, the Love, and Obedience

ence of God, and leads to *the Enjoyment* of him. The most powerful Allurement to *Vice*, that by which it charms and captivates *the Children of Men*, is *the Pleasure* which it promises: But in this *true Piety and Virtue* is infinitely superior. *The Pleasures of Vice and Sin* are little more than imaginary, or at least are mightily heightened by vain Opinion and the Warmth of Fancy: Those of *Religion* are real and sincere, solid and substantial; they approve themselves to cool Reason, and improve upon the Reflection. *The Pleasures of Sin* are low and sensual, suited only to the inferior Part of our Nature: Those of *Religion* are rational and sublime, approaching to *the Joys* of Angels, and to *the Happiness* of God himself. *The Pleasures of Sin* are fleeting and transitory; they are *but for a Season*. Heb. xi. 25. Those of *Piety and Virtue* are stable and permanent. The former are only derived from without, and are therefore uncertain and precarious; the other have their Seat in the Heart and Conscience, and do not depend on the Smiles or Frowns of a flattering or malignant World. Finally, *the Pleasures of Vice and Sin* are succeeded by *Disappointment*, and end in *Bitterness*, often in this World, and most certain-

certainly in the next. *Unhappy Pleasures* these which lead to *eternal Misery and Anguish!* But *the Pleasures of a religious Life* on Earth are the Forerunners of *immortal Joy*, the happy Pledges and Earnests of those *pure and satisfying Pleasures which are at God's right Hand for evermore.*

And now the proper Use and Improvement which should be made of all that hath been offered on this Subject is, that, as we desire *true Happiness and Delight*, we should come to God for it, and seek it in the Way which he hath prescribed. Let us seek it in the Meditations of his Glory, in a Sense of his Love and Favour, in Obedience to his Laws, and in an Imitation of his amiable moral Perfections; or, in other Words, let us seek it in *the Ways of Holiness and Virtue.* For the most Part, Men need not many Arguments to induce them to seek after *Pleasure:* And why should they be so hard to be persuaded, when called to *the noblest Joys?* Here *the most pure and lasting Pleasures* are set before us, to which God himself, the merciful Father of our Beings, condescendeth to invite us. He seeth and pitieth his *unhappy* Creatures that are wearying themselves in Pursuing after *lying Vanities and false deceitful Pleasures,* and, in Compassion to their
 their

their Souls, warneth them not to seek for *Satisfaction where it is not to be found*, and sheweth them the only Way to *true Happiness*. It is his Language, *Wherefore do ye spend your Money for that which is not Bread, and your Labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your Soul delight itself in Fatness. Incline your Ear and come unto me; hear, and your Soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you.* If. lv. 2, 3. He doth not forbid us to seek after *Pleasure*, but is for turning our Views and Pursuits, from the brutish destructive *Pleasures* of Vice and Sin, to the noble and satisfying *Delights* of Religion and Holiness.

If therefore there be any of us that have hitherto been *alienated from God*, and from his Love and Service, and have sought for *Pleasure and Happiness* in the Vanities of this insnaring World, and in the Gratifications of vicious Appetite, let us immediately set ourselves to abandon those evil Courses in which we have been engaged. Let us humble ourselves deeply before God, for having acted a Part so contrary to our Reason, so inconsistent with our Duty and our *true Happiness*, and so unbecoming our *Christian Profession*, and

the glorious Hopes we are raised unto by the Gospel. Ashamed and grieved for our past Sins and Follies, let us earnestly implore his pardoning Mercy, and return to him by *a sincere Repentance and a true and living Faith* From a Sense of the Excellency of the Divine Laws, and a hearty Approbation of the most reasonable and gracious Terms of the Gospel-Covenant, let us yield up ourselves wholly to God, our heavenly Father, our supreme Lord and chief Good, through *Jesus Christ*, the great appointed *Mediator and Saviour*, resolving to endeavour to *walk before him unto all Well-pleasing*, and in him to place our *chief Happiness and Delight*. That is excellent Advice which *Eliphaz* gives to *Job*: *Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at Peace; thereby Good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the Law from his Mouth, and lay up his Words in thine Heart. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away Iniquity far from thy Tabernacles.—Then shalt thou have thy Delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy Face unto God.* Job xxii. 21, 22, 23, 26. Let it therefore be the sincere Language of our Hearts,
 “ Adieu, ye deceitful Pleasures of Sin, the
 “ Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and
 “ the

DISCOURSE XVIII. 371

“ *the Pride of Life!* I will no longer seek
 “ for *Happiness* in you, nor prize your *low*
 “ *evanid Joys*. Let *Religion* take me un-
 “ der it’s blessed Conduct: Here will I
 “ seek for *Pleasure*, and *the conscious Sa-*
 “ *tisfactions* of a well-disposed Mind.
 “ *To whom, gracious God, should I go but*
 “ *unto thee*, in whom alone I can be hap-
 “ *py?* I have long sought to *brew out unto*
 “ *myself Cisterns, broken Cisterns, that can*
 “ *hold no Water*; but it is now the De-
 “ fire of my Soul to return unto thee,
 “ *the only Fountain of living Water*, the
 “ eternal indeficient Source of *Felicity and*
 “ *Joy*; and to seek for *Happiness* in thy
 “ Favour and Love, and in *the Ways of*
 “ *Righteousness* which thou hast prescri-
 “ bed.”

I would particularly address myself, on
 this Occasion, to young Persons, who,
 through the Warmth of their Passions,
 their Want of Experience, and the Infi-
 nuations of evil Company, are apt to be
 decoyed, under the Notion of *Pleasure*,
 into vicious Gratifications, or at least into
 a continual Succession of vain Amuse-
 ments, to the Neglect of every Thing
 that is serious; as if the Applying them-
 selves to the Work of *Religion* were *too se-*
vere and dull a Thing for their Age. Con-

sider, I beseech you, the Account which has been given of the Nature and Excellency of the Divine Commands; and then judge what there is in the Observance of them that is inconsistent with *true Pleasure*. Is there any Thing that really deserves that Name which *Religion* depriveth us of? It abridgeth us of *no Enjoyments* which are within the Bounds of Temperance and Innocence: And shall nothing be called *Pleasure*, but what is Irregularity and Excess? The Man of Religion and Virtue hath *the truest Enjoyment* of himself and of his Friend, as well as of his God; and therefore hath the most just Foundation for *Cheerfulness and Complacency of Mind*. But those have particular Advantages this Way who apply themselves to the Practice of Virtue and Holiness *in the Days of their Youth*: This is comparatively *much easier* to them, than it is to Persons who have been much hardened by a long Course of Sinning, and who are under the Power of inveterate evil Habits, which it requireth great Pains and Trouble to mortify and subdue. They that devote their early Bloom, the Pride of their Years and Strength, to God and his Service, seem to be particularly qualified for Relishing the *Divine Joys*

DISCOURSE XVIII. 373

*Joy*s of Religion, and have just Grounds to hope that God will lift up the Light of his Countenance upon them. Till we apply ourselves in good Earnest to real Piety and Virtue, we cannot properly be said to answer the End of our Being, or to *begin to be happy*; and surely we cannot *begin to be happy* too soon. This will be the best Preparative for all the Events which may befall us in this State of Trial and Discipline: It will lay the surest Foundation for a *comfortable and useful Life*, a *peaceful Death*, and a *happy Eternity*.

To conclude, let those who have given themselves up to God in Sincerity, and who endeavour to approve themselves to him in a *Life of holy Obedience*, shew that they *take Pleasure in the Ways of Religion*, by performing the Duties of it with a *willing and chearful Mind*. Such Persons have a Right to *rejoice*, and it is their Duty to do so: God, who *delighteth in the Happiness* of his Creatures, is then best pleased, when they *serve him with Joy and Gladness of Heart*. It was his Command under the Old Testament, *Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, in all that thou puttest thine Hand unto*. Deut. xii. 18. And again, *Thou shalt rejoice in every good Thing which the Lord thy God giveth unto thee*. Deut. xxvi. 11. And surely

then this is justly expected of us under the New Testament Dispensation, which is fuller of *Consolation*, and hath less of *Rigour* in it, than the Old. It is expressly urged upon *Christians* that *they should rejoice evermore*. 1 Theff. v. 16. *Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice*. Phil. iv. 4. *The Kingdom of God*, which it is the Design of the Gospel to erect in the Souls of Men, is described by this Character, that it is *Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost*. Rom. xiv. 17.

We should therefore regard it, not only as our Privilege, but as an important Part of our Duty to *rejoice*: And great would be the Advantages that would result from it. This would put Life and Vigour into all our Services, and would engage us to persevere in a religious and virtuous Practice with an *unfainting* Constancy and Diligence. It is hard to continue in a Course which we find *no Pleasure* in, especially if strong Temptations or Persecutions arise: But, when we know and feel what a *delightful* Thing *true Godliness* is; what *Joys* are to be found in God, in Loving, Serving, and Obeying him; this will contribute to keep us steady and uniform, and will prevent our *Backsliding* and Growing *wearry in Well-doing*: The Relish we have
for

for those higher and purer *Delights* will raise us above the low and deceitful *Pleasures* of Sin and this vain World.

But then it highly concerneth us to guard against every Thing which hath a Tendency to damp or interrupt those *sacred Joys*: Especially we must be careful not to indulge any darling Lust in our Bosoms, nor allow ourselves in the Practice of any one known presumptuous Sin. We must endeavour to *abound in the Fruits of Righteousness* and to make a continual Progress in the Virtues of the *Christian Life*, and must frequently turn our Thoughts and Attention to those *glorious and delightful Objects* which Religion setteth before us; and this we should do, not only for our own Sakes but for that of others too. The sprightly vigorous *Christian*, who, by *the Delight* he findeth in God, and in the Ways of Righteousness, is rendered *cheerful and agreeable* in his whole Deportment, is an Ornament to his Profession, and maketh a lovely Representation of *Religion* to all that behold him: And, on the other Hand, for a *Christian* to wear a dull and gloomy Aspect, always sighing and complaining, would be a Kind of Contradiction to his Hopes and Professions. Some that have been *truly religious*, and others

who had a Mind to appear so, whilst they shunned an indecent Levity, have, by their sad Aspects and imprudent Severities, brought a Reproach upon *the Ways of Godliness*: But certainly there is nothing in *Religion* itself, duly considered, which can give Countenance to such a Conduct. A good Man hath undoubtedly the most just Foundation for an *inward Joy and Satisfaction of Mind*: And why should not this brighten up his Aspect, and diffuse an *innocent Cheerfulness* through his whole Conversation?

Finally, let us often look forwards to that *Fulness of Joy*, which God hath in his rich Grace and Mercy prepared for good Men *in the heavenly World*, and to which a *Life of true Religion* here on Earth is designed to be preparatory. What *comfortable Lives* should we lead, if we frequently raised our Views in the Meditations of Faith to that *Mount Sion which is above, the City of the living God*; and to an *innumerable Company of Angels, to the general Assembly and Church of the First-born, which are written in Heaven*; to God the Judge of all, and the *Spirits of just Men made perfect*, and to Jesus the Mediator of the *New Covenant*. Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24. To consider that *the Life of holy Obedience,*

to which we are obliged in this State of Trial, will deliver up to us *a Life of immortal Glory in the highest Heavens!* Oh transporting Thought! What *Joy, what Triumph,* must this needs diffuse through the believing Soul! And, if *the Hope of Heaven* be so delightful, what shall *the actual Enjoyment* be! Now our Knowledge and Love of God, and our Conformity to him, is imperfect, and therefore our *Delight* in him is imperfect too: But *Heaven*, which is a State of *perfect Holiness*, is also a State of *consummate Happiness and Enjoyment*. As there we shall be admitted to the immediate beatific Vision of the Deity, and shall have the fullest Exhibitions and Communications of his Love; so we shall *delight* in him in a far fuller and nobler Sense than now we are capable of doing. Our *Joy in God* shall then be *complete*, and we shall be *perfectly satisfied with his Likeness*, and so shall continue to Eternity. Let the Prospects of this refresh and animate us: Let us *rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God*. And do thou, Lord, so assist us by thy Grace and Spirit, that we may be *made meet* for that glorious World, where we shall be *for ever with thee*, and shall be *happy in thy blisful Presence and Love to all Eternity*.

*On the Credibility and Proofs of the Gospel-
Records.*

DISCOURSE XIX.

J O H N XX. 30, 31.

*And many other Things truly did Jesus in the
Presence of his Disciples, which are not
written in this Book. But these are writ-
ten, that ye might believe that Jesus is the
Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing,
ye might have Life through his Name.*

WHOSOEVER seriously considereth
the Excellency of our Saviour's
Doctrines and Discourses, the admirable
Purity of the Morals which he taught, and
the Laws which he delivered, and the Ten-
dency of the Whole to promote the Glory
of God, and the Good of Mankind; and
at the same Time considereth the Beauty
and

and Perfection of his Example and the Virtues that so eminently shine forth in his holy and spotless Life and Character, together with the many *extraordinary* Attestations given him *from Heaven*; the *stupendous Miracles* wrought by himself in Person, and by those whom he commissioned and empowered to work them *in his Name*; but, above all, *his Resurrection from the Dead, and Ascension into Heaven*: I say, any one, that alloweth himself seriously to consider all this, will be apt to acknowledge that, supposing these Things to be certainly true, and that the Accounts which are given us of them may be depended upon, they form so strong a Proof of the Truth and Divinity of *our Saviour's Mission* as is sufficient to satisfy any unprejudiced and well-disposed Mind. But what Reason have we to believe that these Things are true? We were not *Eye or Ear Witnesses* of them; and how is it possible we should, who live at the Distance of many Ages from the Time in which those Discourses were delivered, and those *extraordinary* Facts were done? But must we for that Reason think they are Things in which we have no Concern, and that we can have no Assurance of the Truth and Certainty of those Things sufficient to satisfy our Minds? This would be a very
 wrong

wrong Conclusion, except it were laid down as a Principle, that we are not to believe any Thing, but what *we ourselves see with our own Eyes*: A Principle so absurd that no Man of Sense will seriously maintain it, and from which numberless Absurdities would follow. If this were once generally admitted, no Societies could subsist, a Stop would be put to all judicial Proceedings, no Witnesses could be depended upon in any Case, there would be an End of all Credit and mutual Intercourse among Men, and almost of all our Knowledge and Means of Improvement; we could have no Advantage from the Observations of others, or from the History and Experience of former Ages and other Countries, or of our own Age or Country, in any Case where *we ourselves were not actually present*: In a Word, it would, in it's Consequences, introduce an universal Confusion, Ignorance, and Barbarism. Nothing can be more evident, than that the Author of our Beings hath so formed our Natures, and hath placed us in such Circumstances in the World, that we are under a Necessity of admitting *the Testimony of others* in numberless Instances: And it would not have been so ordered, if this were not an Evidence that is in many Cases sufficient, and safely to be relied upon. And indeed it
cannot

cannot be denied, that there are many Things, that we receive only *by the Testimony of others*, which yet we may be as sure of as if they came to us confirmed *by the immediate Evidence of our own Senses*. Will any Man say, that he cannot be certain there is such a City as *Paris*, or such a Country as *America*, because he was never there? He that should seriously affirm this would be thought to have an Head so oddly turned, that few of them would look upon him to be right in his Senses, or fit to be argued with. The same may be said, as to many Facts done in distant Places, which may come to us so well attested, and confirmed with such Circumstances, that we can no more reasonably doubt that such Actions were done, than if *we ourselves had been present*: And, if any Man should affect not to believe them, and give no other Reason for it, but that *he himself did not see them done*, instead of being admired as a Person of exact Judgment, and who was careful not to be imposed upon, he would only expose himself to just Contempt, as unreasonably standing out against clear Evidence. The like Observation holdeth, with Respect to Things that were done in past Ages. A Man could not more effectually expose himself than by pretending to lay it down as a
 Rule,

DISCOURSE XIX. 383

Rule, that he will believe nothing that happened in any Age or Time before that in which he himself liveth : For it is manifest, that in many Cafes we have as convincing an Assurance of Facts that were done before we were born, as of any Facts whatsoever that were done in our own Time ; and can no more reasonably doubt of them, than if *we saw them with our own Eyes* ; of which many Instances might easily be given, if it were necessary. And this holdeth not only with Regard to Things that were done in the Age immediately preceding, but also with Regard to Facts done at a greater Distance of Time from us, and even several ago. We must not imagine that the Evidence we have of the Certainty of past Facts always diminisheth, in Proportion to the Distance of Time from us in which they were done. This dependeth upon other Circumstances ; for Things done several Ages ago may be transmitted to us in such a Manner, and with such a Degree of Evidence, as to leave no Room for reasonable Doubt concerning them ; and, on the other Hand, we may be very uncertain as to Things said to be done in the former, or in the present Age, for Want of having them confirmed to us by proper Evidence.

Upon

Upon the Whole, it is manifest that our not having lived in the Age or Country in which Things were done is no just Argument to prove, that therefore we cannot be sure they were done, or to make it reasonable for us to doubt whether they were done. Must we then lightly give Credit to every Thing that is reported to have been done in former Ages, or other Countries? This would argue a foolish Credulity, and would be equally absurd and void of Reason, as to believe nothing at all of what was done in former Times. What remaineth therefore is, that we must carefully consider and examine the Nature of the Evidence, and the Conveyance by which Things are transmitted to us, that we may be able to form a proper Judgment concerning them.

There are two Ways by which the Knowledge of past Facts, Doctrines, or Laws, may be transmitted to succeeding Ages: The one is by *oral Tradition*, or verbal Relations and Reports, conveyed from Age to Age; the other is by *written Accounts* or *Records*: And each of these may be attended with collateral Circumstances, that may heighten or diminish the Evidence arising from them. As to the former of these, *viz. oral Tradition*, it must be acknowledged not to be so certain a Way of Conveyance. Indeed some
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main Facts may be thus conveyed with a considerable Degree of Certainty ; but the Circumstances of Facts, and especially Doctrines and Laws, can scarce be conveyed this Way in such a Manner as may be depended upon. This was the only Way of conveying them, in the earliest Ages before the Flood ; and, when the Life of Man was generally very much longer than now it is, Things might be thus conveyed with some Degree of Probability ; but now, by the Experience of all Mankind, it is subject to many Uncertainties. When the Preserving the Remembrance of Things, and especially of Doctrines and Discourses, is left merely to *oral Tradition*, there is great Danger of their being in Process of Time quite lost, or at least very much varied from what they originally were.

The safest Way of transmitting past Facts, but especially Doctrines and Laws, and the Circumstances of Facts, is *by Writing*. It is thus that authentic Histories of past Events are preserved, and that the public *Records* are transmitted to us. It is by this that we come to know the Laws that have been formerly enacted, the Constitutions of States, the various Revolutions of Kingdoms and Empires, the Lives and Actions of great Men, the Sayings, the Doctrines, and the

Sentiments of the Wise and Learned ; and by this we have the Accounts of many *extraordinary* Events, *uncommon* Facts, that have happened from Time to Time, and which are received by the most knowing and judicious Persons, without Scruple, on the Credit of those Accounts, when there is good Reason to believe them genuine. And it is then that there is the greatest Reason to believe and depend upon *written* Accounts of Facts, of Doctrines, and Laws, when the Accounts were committed to *Writing*, in the very Age in which the Doctrines were delivered, or the Facts were done ; and by Persons that were *Witnesses* to those Facts, or perfectly well acquainted with them ; and who at the same Time appear to have been Persons of great Fidelity and Sincerity ; who, we have all the Reason in the World to think, had no Intention to impose upon others, nor Interest in doing so ; especially if *the Writings themselves* have all the Characters of Truth, Simplicity, and Integrity that can be desired, and have nothing in them that can give any reasonable Suspicion of Fraud.

Now to apply all this to the Case before us. It is highly reasonable to think that, supposing *God to have sent his Son to save and to redeem Mankind, and to bring a Revelation from*

from Heaven, exhibiting the best and most perfect Scheme of Religion that ever was published to the World, he designed it, not merely for the Use and Benefit of that Age in which these Things actually came to pass, but also of succeeding Ages. We may therefore justly conclude from his Wisdom and Goodness, that he would take Care that *the Revelation itself*, with it's Doctrines and Laws, and an Account of the *extraordinary* Facts by which it was attested and confirmed, should be transmitted to succeeding Ages, in a Manner that might be safely depended upon; and consequently, that he would take Care that it should be transmitted in *written authentic Records*, this being, as was before observed, the safest Way of conveying the Knowledge of Doctrines or Facts that were taught or done in past Ages, and every Way sufficient to lay a Foundation for a reasonable Belief. Now this is the Method that hath been actually taken, with Regard to *the Gospel Revelation*. *The original Revelation itself*, the Doctrines and Discourses of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and the wonderful Facts that attested *his Divine Mission*, are transmitted to us in *Records* that have all the Marks of Credibility and Authenticity that can be reasonably desired: For *they were written*, in the very Age in

which those Doctrines and Laws were delivered, and those Facts were done; and by Persons who were *themselves Witnesses* to those Facts, and perfectly acquainted with those Doctrines and Laws; and who appear at the same Time to have been Persons of great Integrity and undesigned Simplicity, and who could have no Interests of their own to serve in Promoting a Religion that had nothing in it to flatter their Hopes and Views, and that was contrary to their most favourite Passions and Prejudices. Add to this that *the Writings themselves* have remarkable internal Characters of Purity and Simplicity and of an impartial Regard to Truth, and not one Mark of the Contrary; which it is scarce possible intirely to avoid in *Writings* artfully contrived to serve a Purpose: And it carrieth the Evidence as far as it can go, when we consider that, besides all this, we have good Reason to believe that the Persons that *wrote* those Accounts were under a *Divine Guidance*, to preserve them from Mistake and Error, and to assist them in giving a just and true Account of those Facts, Doctrines and Laws. If this be a true State of the Case with regard to *the evangelical Records*, then it appeareth that they may be safely depended upon; and that it is with great Justness and Propriety that

DISCOURSE XIX. 389

that it is here declared by the *Apostle and Evangelist St. John* (and it holdeth equally, with regard to the Accounts given us by the other *Evangelists*) *these Things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have Life through his Name.* Where it is plainly signified that the original Design, for which these Accounts of our Saviour's Life, Discourses, Miracles, and Resurrection were committed to *Writing*, was, that Men might be thereby engaged to *receive and believe in Jesus Christ*, in order to their Obtaining *eternal Life and Salvation through him*; and it is also intimated that these Accounts are of such a Nature as to be every Way sufficient to produce this Effect in those that impartially read and consider them.

To set all this in a proper Light I propose distinctly to shew,

First, That *the evangelical Records were written* in the apostolical Age, that is, in the Age in which the Facts were done, and the Doctrines and Laws taught and delivered, which are there *recorded*.

Secondly, That *they were written* by Persons who were themselves perfectly acquainted with the Things they relate, and fully assured of the Truth of them.

Thirdly, That *these Writings* have all the

internal Characters of Fairness and Impartially, of Pureness and Simplicity, that *any Writings* can possibly have, and which clearly shew that *the Writers of them* were Persons of the greatest Sincerity, and had nothing but Truth in View.

Fourthly, That the Character and Discourses of our blessed Lord, as represented in *the evangelical Writings*, carry the plain Evidences of their own Genuineness and Divinity, and are of such a Nature, that there is great Reason to think that *the Writers* of those Accounts were not capable of feigning them, even if they had been disposed to do so.

Fifthly, That which giveth a mighty Weight to all this is, that we have good Reason to believe, that *those Writers* were under a *Divine Guidance*, so as to be kept from Erring in the Accounts they give.

Sixthly, It is no small Confirmation of the Truth of *the evangelical Records*, that it was upon the Credit of the Facts, that are there related concerning our Lord *Jesus Christ*, that great Numbers, both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, were brought to embrace the Religion of *Jesus*, even in the first Age, when there was the best Opportunity of knowing the Truth of those Facts; and that in Opposition to their most inveterate
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Prejudices, and when by Embracing it they exposed themselves to the most grievous Persecutions and Sufferings.

To all this it may be added that we have all the Evidence that can be reasonably desired to satisfy us, that *these sacred Writings* are transmitted safe and uncorrupted to us.

First, *The evangelical Records were written* in the apostolical Age, that is, in the Age in which the Facts were done, and the Laws and Doctrines taught and delivered, which are there *recorded*.

The best Evidence that can be reasonably desired to shew that *any Books were written* at the Time in which they have been said to be *written* is, when they can be clearly traced up by unquestionable Evidence to the very Age in which they are said to have been *written*, and can be proved to have been still in Being, and when *the Books themselves* do also carry plain Marks and Characters of *being written* in that Age, and not the least Mark of the Contrary. And this is certainly the Case, with regard to the *evangelical Records*: *Those Books*, which are now universally received by all *Christians* as *the Writings of the Evangelists*, may be clearly traced, through every Age from that in which we live, up to the Times of *the Apostles*. In every Age from that Time to this, we have unquestionable

nable Proofs of their having been still extant, and that *their Authority* was acknowledged among *Christians*. There are still remaining Numbers of *Books and Writings* of various Sorts *written* by Persons of different Nations and Parties, who lived in the several Ages between this and the apostolical Times, in which there are frequent References to *the Gospels and other sacred Books of the New Testament*; they have been constantly appealed to for deciding Controversies among *Christians*; many Passages have been quoted out of them, in every Age, the same that are now to be found in them; Discourses have been made and Commentaries *written* upon them by many different Authors who have preserved large Portions of them in their *Writings*, and innumerable Copies of them have been spread abroad, and translated into different Languages. These are Matters of Fact which no Man can be so hardy as to deny: And by this Kind of Evidence, the strongest and most convincing that the Nature of the Case can possibly admit of, they can be proved to have been still in Being, till we come to the Age immediately succeeding that of the *Apostles*. As to the apostolical Age itself, there are but few of the *Writings* of that Age transmitted to our Time, and in those
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DISCOURSE XIX. 39

few there are plain References *to the sacred Writings of the New Testament*, and to the Doctrines and Facts *recorded* there, particularly in *the Gospels*. But there are many Books still in our Hands, which were *written* by Authors who unquestionably lived in the second Century after our Saviour, in which these Writings are frequently referred and appealed to as of *Divine Authority*, and many Quotations are drawn out of them, by which it is manifest, that they were then received with great Veneration by the *Christian Churches*, which, even in that Age, were become very numerous; and it appeareth by an Apology still extant, which was addressed, in that Age, to the *Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius* on the Behalf of the *Christians*, that it was then the ordinary Practice to read *the Gospels*, together with *the Writings of the Prophets*, in their religious Assemblies. This Apology was written about an hundred Years after the Death of our Saviour by *Justin Martyr*, who, of an *Heathen Philosopher*, became a *Christian*. And, since *these sacred Writings* were so generally spread, which must necessarily have taken up some Time, and were had in such great Esteem and Veneration among *Christians*, even in the Age next following that of *the Apostles*, this plainly sheweth that *they*
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must have been written in the apostolical Age itself, and that they were regarded as *authentic*, and as containing a just Account of the Words and Actions of our Saviour. Accordingly *Eusebius*, speaking of some eminent Persons that held the first Rank in the Succession of *the Apostles*, who scattered abroad the salutary Seeds of *the Kingdom of Heaven* all over the World, and, travelling abroad, performed the Work of *Evangelists*, informs us that, wherever they went preaching among the Nations, they delivered *the Scripture of the Divine Gospel*, *i. e.* they carried *those sacred Writings* along with them, and put them into the Hands of the *Christian Converts*. And indeed *the Writings themselves* bear the evident Characters of the apostolical Age, and not one Mark of a later Date. If *the Writings of the New Testament had been written* in any succeeding Age, there is great Reason to think that, in several Things, they would have been different from what they now are. It could scarce have been avoided, but that, in some Parts of *those Writings*, there would have been some Reference or Allusion to Customs, Rites, Questions, or Controversies, which had not their Rise till after the Times of the Apostles; whereas there is now nothing that in the least looketh that Way. All Things breathe the Purity

riety and Simplicity of the first Age; and the Idea, that is given of the *Christian Church in the Books of the New Testament*, hath the peculiar Characters of that Age, from which there were some Variations, even in the Age which immediately followed.

With regard to *the Gospel of St. John*, it appeareth from *the Book itself*, that it was written by the Disciple whom Jesus loved, and who himself saw and heard what he relateth. And it is universally agreed, that *the other Gospels were written* earlier than that of St. John; and that the principal Design of it was to record several Things which were not distinctly taken Notice of by the other *Evangelists*. And this may be fairly concluded from the Matter of that *Book*, in which, though the Facts are plainly supposed that are related by the other *Evangelists*, yet *those Miracles and Discourses* of our Saviour are principally insisted upon which either were omitted by the others, or but slightly mentioned. If we compare the Beginning of St. Luke's Gospel, Chap. i. 3, 4, with the Beginning of *the Acts of the Apostles* Chap. i. 1, 2, as it is manifest that *both were written* by the same Author, so also that he had *wrote his Gospel*, before he *wrote the Acts*: And yet it plainly appeareth, that the Book of
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the *Acts of the Apostles* was written in the apostolical Age, and some Time before the Death of St. Paul: For it is evident from the Accounts given in that *Book* that *the Writer* of it was a Companion of St. Paul in his Labours and Travels, and particularly that he was with him in his Voyage to Rome, after his having been seized and accused by the Jews, with an Account of which, and of St. Paul's Preaching there two Years in his own hired House, the *Book* ends. It taketh no Notice of his after Travels, or of his second Imprisonment at Rome, and his Martyrdom there, which it would undoubtedly have done, as well as it doth of the Martyrdom of St. James, if it had been written, after these Events had happened. And it is a great Proof of the high Veneration the first Christians had for these Writings that none of them ever pretended to make Additions to this *Book*, either with regard to St. Paul, or to any other of the Apostles. We may justly conclude then that St. Luke's Gospel, which, was written before the *Acts*, must have been written early in the apostolical Age. And that of St. Matthew hath been generally acknowledged to have been written before his; and, according to the most probable Accounts,

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about the eighth Year after the Death of our Saviour.

It is no inconsiderable Argument to shew, that *the evangelical Records were written in the apostolical Age*, that, though *Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, all give a distinct Account of our Lord's Predictions concerning the Destruction of *Jerusalem*; and the Desolation of the *Jewish Nation*, yet not one of them, or of any of *the other sacred Writers of the New Testament*, ever give the least Hint of the Accomplishment of those Predictions, or of the exemplary Vengeance that was inflicted upon the unbelieving *Jews*, though it was a Thing so much to the Honour of *Christianity*, and which mightily tended to the Confirmation of it, and was particularly of great Importance in that early Controversy concerning the Obligation of the *Mosaical Law and Ceremonies upon the Disciples of Jesus*. This sheweth that *they were written before that great Event*, which yet came to pass within forty Years after our Lord's Crucifixion. It is true *St. John* taketh no Notice of it in *his Gospel*, though it is generally believed *to have been written after that Event*; but this may be easily accounted for, because he taketh no Notice of the Prediction itself, which had been fully recorded by all the other *Evangelists*, and was therefore

therefore omitted by him, and consequently he had no Occasion to take Notice of it's Accomplishment.

These several Considerations plainly lead us to conclude, with all the Evidence that can be desired in such a Case, that *the Books of the Evangelists were written* in the apostolical Age: Nor do I find that the bitterest Enemies of *Christianity*, in the earliest Ages, ever denied this. *Celsus*, a Man of great Acuteness, and a virulent Opposer of the *Christian* Religion, who lived in the second Century, at the same Time that he endeavours to expose those Accounts, yet all along supposeth them *to have been written* by *Christ's* own Disciples and Attendants: And *Julian* the Apostate, whose Wit and Learning, as well as Enmity to *Christianity*, is well known, when he chargeth the *Christians* with not continuing in the Things delivered to them by the Apostles, makes particular Mention, not only of the Apostle *Paul*, but of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*; which shews, that he did not deny them to be *the Writers* of the *Books* ascribed to them, and that he looked upon *those Books to have been written* in the apostolical Times; and, if they *were written* in those Times, they *were written* in the Age in which the Facts there *recorded* were said to have

have been done. And the Facts themselves were of such a Nature, reported to have been done publicly, and attended with such Circumstances, that, if the Accounts given of them by *the Evangelists* had been false, they must have been immediately detected, especially considering the Number and Power of their Enemies, who would have eagerly laid hold of any Advantages of exposing and confounding them : But these Things I may have Occasion to consider more fully afterwards.

At present I would conclude with observing, that it is a very signal Advantage that, though we did not live in the Time of *our Saviour and his Apostles*, yet we have an *authentic* Account of the Religion which they taught, and of the Evidences whereby it was confirmed, plainly set before us in *Books that were written* in that Age ; which Books are now in our Hands, and bear the illustrious Characters of uncorrupted Truth, Righteousness, and Purity. And, if we so believe the Accounts given us in *those sacred Writings* as to receive Christ's heavenly Doctrines into our Hearts, and to govern ourselves by his holy and excellent Laws, they will be as available to our *eternal Salvation*, as if we had actually lived in that Age ; and we shall be intitled to *the Blessedness* which our
Saviour

400 D I S C O U R S E XIX.

Saviour speaks of in those remarkable Words of his to *Thomas*, of which we have an Account in the Verses preceding the Text : *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed : Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*



On the Credibility and Proofs of the Gospel-Records.

DISCOURSE XX.

J O H N XX. 30, 31.

And many other Things truly did Jesus in the Presence of his Disciples, which are not written in this Book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have Life through his Name.

TH E S E remarkable Words of *the* Apostle John are intended to shew the excellent Design for which *the evangelical Records were written*, and the happy and salutary Effects they have a Tendency to produce, where they are sincerely believed and embraced. It is therefore undeniably of great Importance to us to get

our Minds established in a well-grounded Persuasion of the Truth and Certainty of the Accounts that are there given us concerning our Lord *Jesus Christ*, especially since we live in an Age in which the Credit of our holy Religion, and the original *Records* of it, is so boldly struck at. Accordingly, in my former Discourse on these Words, after offering some general Considerations to prepare our Way, it was shewn, That we have all the Evidence that can reasonably be desired to satisfy us, that *the Books of the Evangelists were written* in the apostolical Age, *i. e.* in the Age in which the Facts were done, and the Laws and Doctrines taught and delivered, which are there *recorded*.

I now proceed to the Second Thing I proposed to shew, which was, That *these Books were written* by Persons who were themselves perfectly acquainted with the Things they relate, and fully assured of the Truth of them. Two of the Evangelists, *Matthew* and *John*, were *Christ's Apostles*, who were his special Intimates, and constantly attended him in his personal Ministry, and *saw and conversed with him*, after his Resurrection. The other two, *Mark* and *Luke*, are probably supposed to have been of the Number of *the Seventy Disciples*, as some *Ecclesiastical Writers* inform us ;
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in which Case they also were among those that attended our Lord *Jesus Christ*; but, whether they were of *the Seventy Disciples*, or not, they were certainly Companions of *the Apostles*, and had a perfect Understanding of all Things from the very first, as *St. Luke* speaks. *The Apostles* might justly declare, as *St. John* expresseth it, *That which was from the Beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our Eyes, which we have looked upon, which our Hands have handled of the Word of Life — that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.* 1 John i. 1, 3. The Instructions and Discourses of our blessed Lord, of which they give an Account, were what they heard him deliver; and the wonderful Works they relate, as done by him, were what they themselves saw. And these Works were not merely a few extraordinary Facts done now and then, but a Series of Facts done for a considerable Time together, all tending to the same End, and giving Weight and Force to one another: They were Facts obvious to all their Senses, and which they had a full Opportunity of knowing and examining in all their Circumstances. And they had the same Reason to be assured, that *Christ rose again from the Dead*, as that he had lived

and taught among them, and *had done many wonderful Works*, and that *he was at length crucified and slain, viz. the concurring Testimony of all their Senses; their Seeing, Hearing, Feeling, Conversing, Eating, and Drinking with him, after his Resurrection.* And therefore St. *Luke's* Manner of expressing himself on this Occasion is very just and well founded, *viz. that he, Jesus, shewed himself to them alive, after his Passion, by many infallible Proofs, being seen of them forty Days, and speaking of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.* Acts i. 3. And it was an additional mighty Confirmation of the Truth of his *Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven*, of which they were also *Witnesses*, that they themselves, in a few Days after his *Ascension*, received the extraordinary *Gifts of the Holy Ghost*, as he had promised them. It is manifest, therefore, that the Things related by the *Apostles* concerning *Jesus*, and which *are recorded in the Gospels*, were Things which they themselves were fully acquainted with, and of which they had a perfect Knowledge and Assurance: They were Things in which they could not be deceived, and which they were as sure of as any Man can be of what he *bears and sees.*

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And accordingly that they themselves were absolutely persuaded of the Truth of what they relate admits of the clearest Evidence: No Man can impartially consider the Accounts they give, without being sensible of this. They relate these Things plainly and circumstantially, with an Openness and Simplicity, and Confidence of Truth: They all along represent *Christ's* whole personal Ministry as a public Thing well known throughout all *Judea*; that his admirable Discourses and Instructions were, for the most Part, delivered in *the Hearing of his own Disciples, and of Multitudes of People*; and, in like Manner, his *wonderful Works* were done, not in a private and secret Way, but in the Presence of great Numbers of Persons, and even of his Enemies, those that were most strongly prejudiced against him. They inform us, that *he went about through the Cities and Villages, teaching and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all Manner of Sicknesses and Diseases among the People*; that *Multitudes followed him from Galilee, and from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan, and they about Tyre and Sidon*; and even that *his Fame went through all Syria, and they brought to him, from all*

Parts, sick Persons that were taken with divers Diseases and Torments, and he healed them all. See Matt. iv. 23, 24, 25. Mark. iii. 7, 8. vi. 5 6. They tell of his miraculous Feeding five thousand Men at one Time, and four thousand at another, besides Women and Children; and they represent many of his Miracles as done at Jerusalem, at the Times of their public Festivals, when there was a vast Concourse of People from all Parts of the World. To relate Facts of this Kind, and as done in so public a Manner, that the whole Country must have known whether these Things were so, or not, was in Effect to appeal to Thousands of Witnesses, and plainly shews, that they perfectly knew the Facts were as they represented them, and that they were Things so well known, that their bitterest Enemies, of whom there were many, could not deny them.

To this may be added, as a farther Proof that *the Apostles were themselves perfectly assured* of the Truth of the Things they relate concerning *Jesus*, that nothing less than a firm Persuasion of this can possibly account for their Adhering with such inviolable Zeal and Constancy to him as the *Messiah*, after his *Crucifixion and Death*. They were without all Doubt prodigiously shocked

shocked and scandalised, when they saw him, whom they looked upon as *the Christ*, treated as the vilest of Malefactors with the utmost Ignominy and Contempt, *crowned with Thorns, scourged, and at length expiring upon the Cross.* If the Matter had rested here, and *he had not risen again*, all their pleasing Hopes of his *Messiahship*, and of his *Kingdom*, had been blasted at once : Nor can it be conceived, that in that Case they would have concerned themselves farther about him, any more than the *Jews* did about others of their pretended *Messiahs*, after they had been *put to Death*. How could it have entered into their Heads to think of Persuading the *Jews* to acknowledge and receive one for the *Messiah* who had been publicly *condemned as a Deceiver and Blasphemer by the chief Priests and the great Council*, for whose Decisions the whole Nation had so great a Veneration ? Much less could they ever have hoped to persuade the *Gentiles* to receive a *crucified Jew for the Son of God, the Saviour of the World*; and to place their Trust in him *as the Author and Giver of eternal Life*, who had himself been *put to an ignominious Death*. This, at first View, would seem so strangely absurd that, if they had not been them-

selves persuaded, both that what they related concerning *Christ's Miracles and Resurrection* was true, and that they could produce Evidences sufficient to convince Mankind of the Truth of these Things, they must have been absolutely out of their Senses, (a Character which any one that reads their excellent *Writings* must be convinced doth by no Means belong to them) to suppose that such a Scheme could possibly take either with *Jews* or *Gentiles*. What Hope could they possibly have had from *Jesus Christ*, when he *was dead*, if he had not *risen again*, as he foretold? It is evident that on that Supposition all their Expectations from him, as to worldly Advantages to be obtained in his *Kingdom*, were perished. If it was the Hope of obtaining *eternal Life through him* that was the prevailing Inducement, this very Hope is the strongest Proof of the firm Persuasion they had of *the Divinity of his Mission*, and of the Truth of the Facts by which it is supported, especially his *Resurrection from the Dead*: For what Hope could they have of *eternal Life* from one who, they must, in that Case, have been sensible had deceived them? Or what Happiness or Reward could they expect from God, even according to their own Notions, for their
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their publishing what they themselves knew to be false, and deliberately carrying on a solemn Imposture in his Name? And that with this Aggravation that they made it their Business to persuade great Numbers of Persons to expose themselves to the most grievous Sufferings, and even *to lay down their Lives* for what they who put them upon it knew to be an Imposture; which must have been so transcendent a Wickedness, that Persons of such excellent Characters and Dispositions, as they appear from their whole Conduct to have been, cannot be supposed to have been capable of it. Upon the Whole, no Reason can possibly be assigned for their manifesting such an unparalleled Affection and Esteem for *Jesus Christ*, after his *Crucifixion and Death*, for their devoting themselves and all their Labours with an unwearied Ardor to serve the Interests of his *Kingdom*, for their trusting so confidently in him for *Salvation*, and so joyfully enduring the most grievous Sufferings and Persecutions *for his Sake*; for and their publishing a Religion *in his Name*, contrary to the most favourite Notions, as well to as the darling Passions and rooted Prejudices both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*; but their being fully persuaded of the Truth
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of what they themselves declared concerning *the Miracles* he performed, and the Doctrines he taught; and concerning his *Resurrection from the Dead, and Exaltation at the right Hand of the Majesty on high*. This fully accounteth for their Conduct, and nothing else can do it: It was this that was the proper Source of their admirable Self-denial, Patience, and Constancy. And indeed whosoever impartially considereth the Whole of their Practice and Character, their eminent Piety, Humility, Simplicity, their ardent Desire of promoting *the Glory of God* and the Happiness and Salvation of Mankind, and the Cause and Interests of Virtue and Righteousness in the World, will find the greatest Reason to be convinced of their Sincerity: And, taking the several Considerations that have been mentioned together, it seems to be upon the Matter as plain, that *the Apostles themselves believed* those Things which they published concerning *Jesus Christ*, and which are recorded in the *evangelical Writings*, as it is that they endeavoured to persuade others to *believe* them. And of this we have as good Reason to be assured as that there were such Persons as the *Apostles*, or that there was such a Person as *Jesus*, whose Disciples and Attendants they

they were: And he that should pretend to doubt of this would only render himself ridiculous: He might as reasonably pretend to doubt that the Religion of *Jesus* was published at all, and that there are *Christians* now in the World. And, if *the Apostles* were themselves convinced and persuaded that these Things were true, this shews that they were really true, because they could not but know whether these Things, were true, or not, since, as hath been observed, they were *Eye and Ear Witnesses*, the constant Attendants of *Jesus*; and, if they could be deceived in Things of such a Nature, which they had so many Ways of knowing and being assured of, and which came to them confirmed by the Testimony of all their Senses, no Man living can be certain of any Thing that he *bears or sees*.

Thirdly, The next Thing I proposed to shew was, that *the evangelical Writings* have all the internal Characters of Fairness and Impartiality, of Candor and Simplicity, that *any Writings* can possibly have, and which clearly shew that *the Writers of them* were Persons of great Integrity, and had nothing but Truth in View, and that the Accounts which are there given may be safely depended upon. Whosoever impartially

partially considereth *the Books of the Evangelists* will find that they every-where breathe a genuine unaffected Simplicity and Love of Truth, as well as an eminent Piety. There are not any Traces to be found of the Spirit of this World, of carnal Policy, Ambition, Avarice, or Sensuality; nothing that can give the least Ground of Suspicion, that *the Writers of them* had a Design to impose upon Mankind. No Arts are made Use of for prepossessing and captivating the Reader. There are no Attempts to move and engage the Passions, no deceitful Colourings or plausible Digressions; but a plain, naked, simple Narration of Facts and Discourses, without any Ornaments, Amplification, or Disguise. And, as there are no Marks of Imposture to be found in *these Writings*, so neither is there any Thing that discovereth a hot wild Enthusiasm. *The Evangelists*, relate with a calm Simplicity, *Christ's* wonderful Actions and excellent Discourses, without interposing any Reflections to bespeak the Admiration of the Readers, or to express their own: And, with the same Coolness, they take Notice of the base and impious Reflections cast upon him, without signifying their Indignation, as was natural on such Occasions.

Occasions. And, even when they relate his grievous Sufferings, and the cruel Indignities put upon him, there are no tragical Exclamations, no Expressions of Wrath and Bitterness against his Enemies and Persecutors: They write as if they were divested of human Passions and Prejudices, and in a Way that shews they were under the Conduct of a *Divine Spirit, that Wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable.*

As many of *Christ's* excellent Discourses and Instructions were occasional, so they are related by the *Evangelists* with the Circumstances and Occurrences that gave Occasion to them; which is no small Evidence of their Genuineness; whereas, had his Doctrines and Instructions been worked up into a formal System, there would have been greater Reason to suspect Art and Contrivance. They content themselves with relating his Discourses and divine Lessons, as he delivered them: And, if there were any Thing in them at any Time that might seem *hard to be understood*, and apt to prejudice Persons against him, they take no Pains to conceal it, nor add any Thing of their own by Way of Softening or Apology. Several Things are represented by them as spoken by our Lord, which they

they would not have mentioned, if they had been *artful Writers*, that studied only to relate those Things which might have a specious Appearance. Thus St. *John* gives an Account of that mystical and figurative Discourse of our Lord concerning *Eating his Flesh and Drinking his Blood*, at which, as he informs us, many of those that had professed to be *his Disciples*, taking it in a gross literal Sense, were so offended that *they went back, and walked no more with him*: St. *Matthew* represents *Christ* as declaring to his *Apostles*, *Think not that I am come to send Peace on Earth: I came not to send Peace, but a Sword: For I am come to set a Man at Variance against his Father, and the Daughter against her Mother, and the Daughter-in-Law against her Mother-in-Law; and a Man's Foes shall be they of his own Household*. Matt. x. 34, 35, 36. And though this, if rightly considered, furnisheth a Proof of his foreseeing Mind, and that he well knew the great Progress that his Religion, though propagated by the most unlikely Instruments, would make in the World, as well as the violent Opposition that would be raised against it, notwithstanding it's benevolent Nature and Tendency; yet, at first View, the Manner of Expression appears
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DISCOURSE XX. 415

to be so harsh, and to make so disadvantageous a Representation of the Effects of *his Coming*, that it can scarce be supposed *his Disciples* would have represented him as saying such Things, if they had not fixed it as a Rule to themselves to adhere with the greatest Exactness to Truth in the Accounts they give of his Discourses. In the same Discourse he tells his *Disciples*, that *they should be hated of all Men for his Name's Sake*, Ver. 22. And elsewhere we find him declaring, *Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me*. Mark viii. 34. And on another Occasion we are told, that *there went great Multitudes with him, and he turned and said unto them, If any Man come to me, and hate not his Father, and Mother, and Wife, and Children, and Brethren, and Sisters, yea, and his own Life also, (i. e. if he be not ready to forsake and abandon them, when called to it) for my Sake, he cannot be my Disciple*. Luke xiv. 25, 26. And immediately after he declares, *Whosoever there be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my Disciple*. Ver. 33. It can neither be supposed, that our Lord *Jesus Christ*, if he had been an artful Impostor, would have expressed himself at this Rate; nor that *the Apostles and Evangelists*,

416 DISCOURSE XX.

gelifts, if they had not been Persons of great Honesty and Integrity, would have represented him as speaking in such a Manner ; which, in all Likelihood, instead of engaging Persons to embrace his Religion, would effectually discourage and deter them from it. And their Adhering to him, after his making such Declarations, could be only owing to their being fully convinced that he was *the Divine Person* he professed himself to be, and to their Hopes of obtaining a glorious Reward in a better World for what they should suffer for his Sake in this : And this Hope and Conviction was founded on *the Assurance* they had of the Truth and Certainty of those Facts by which *his Divine Mission* was attested and confirmed.

If the *Evangelists* had not been *fair and faithful Writers*, that had an inviolable Regard to Truth, they would not have been so silent as to what *Jesus* did in the first thirty Years of his Life before his Entrance on his public Ministry. If they had given themselves a Liberty to indulge Fiction, it would have been much easier to have forged *Miracles* as done by him, when he was in a more private Way, than afterwards when he made his public Appearance, and had *Thousands* to be *Witnesses*

nesses of his Actions : But, though in some *spurious Writings* of After-ages we find Relations of *wonderful Things* pretended to have been done by *Jesus*, while he was yet a Child, nothing of this appeareth in *the Evangelists*, who never allowed themselves to relate any Thing, however it might seem to be for his Honour, but what they were assured was strictly true.

If they had not been determined to relate Things with the utmost Impartiality, they would not have mentioned the strange Treatment he met with from his own Countrymen of *Nazareth*, and their contemptuous Manner of speaking of him : *Is not this the Carpenter ? And the Carpenter's Son ?* They would not have introduced him as saying to one that declared his Resolution to follow him, *Foxes have Holes, and the Birds of the Air have Nests ; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his Head.* Much less would they have mentioned the malicious Scoffs, the blasphemous Reproaches and Calumnies that were cast upon him, as that *he was a Wine-bibber and Glutton, a Friend to Publicans and Sinners, a Samaritan, a Deceiver, one that had a Devil, and was mad, and that he wrought his Miracles by the Help of Beelzebub, the Prince of the Devils.* Their Re-

cording these Censures, which, considering the Affection and Veneration they had for *Jesus*, must have filled them with Horror, is a great Proof that they were *fair Writers*, and that they were not for concealing what his bitterest Enemies said against him: And, at the same Time, some of these Censures plainly shew, that his greatest Enemies could not deny that *he wrought many signal Miracles*, which were above the Power of Man to perform, and which therefore, to hinder the Impression they might make upon the People, they ascribed to a diabolical Power.

But no-where does the Sincerity and Impartiality of *the evangelical Writers* more signally appear than in the Accounts they give of our Saviour's *last Sufferings and Death*. None of the Circumstances attending it are concealed; not even those that might seem most ignominious and reproachful. With Regard to his Behaviour on that Occasion, they represent him, even in his Entering upon his *last Sufferings*, as *fore amazed and very heavy*; as declaring that *his Soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto Death*; as in a *direful Agony*; and as offering up a Prayer, which, at first View, might have the Appearance of his Declining those Sufferings. What rendereth

dereth this more remarkable is, that *the New Testament Writers* represent *Christ's Apostles* and the primitive *Christians*, after his Departure out of the World, as *rejoicing to suffer Shame for his Name*; as cheerfully enduring the greatest Sufferings; yea, and as *more than Conquerors*, as one of them nobly expresseth it, *over Tribulation, Persecution, and Death itself*. Why then did they not represent their great Lord and Master, who himself exhorted *his Disciples to rejoice and be exceeding glad, when persecuted for Righteousness Sake*, as *exulting in the Midst of Sufferings and Torments*, and as uttering some glorious Expressions that shewed his absolute Contempt of Death, and that he triumphed over all the Rage and Malice of his Enemies? This certainly is the Representation they would have made, if they had allowed themselves to have feigned any Thing for their Master's Honour; or at least they would have carefully concealed every Thing that might seem to have a contrary Appearance. - But they had nothing but Truth in View, and relate Things nakedly as they were, without endeavouring to palliate or disguise them. It is observable, indeed, that, taking the whole Account together, there never was any Thing more

solemn and affecting; and that, if duly considered, it tendeth to raise in us a high Idea of our Saviour's Character; but this is not owing to any Art or Disguise in the Relators, but is merely what ariseth from the plain simple Narration, and from the Facts themselves laid together, and compared with what *the Scriptures* teach us concerning the Reasons and Ends of *Christ's* Sufferings. I add, that this their Simplicity and Impartiality, in relating those Things which his Enemies might be apt to turn to his Disadvantage, deriveth a Credit to the Accounts they give of other extraordinary Circumstances attending his *Crucifixion*, such as *the Earthquake, the universal Darknes that covered the whole Land for three Hours, the Splitting of the Rock, and the Rending of the Vail of the Temple in Twain from the Top to the Bottom.* And indeed these were Things of so public a Nature, especially considering the vast Concourse of People from all Parts, who were then at *Jerusalem* at the Feast of the *Passover*, that Thousands must have easily detected them, in that Age, if they had been false; nor could they possibly have imposed such Facts upon the People, if they had not been known to be incontestably true.

It

It is a farther Proof of that impartial Regard to Truth so observable in the *Evangelical Writers*, that they relate without Disguise Things which seem to bear hard upon the Character of *the Apostles*; though some of these *Writers* were *Apostles* themselves, and others their great Friends and Intimates. They do not conceal it, that one of them was a *Publican*, a Character infamous among the *Jews*; that others of them were *Fishermen*, Persons of a mean Condition, and of no Figure or Reputation in the World. They freely represent their Weakness of Faith, their Dulness of Apprehension, and the Power of their Prejudices, which sometimes hindered them from understanding the Things that were most plainly told them; as also their Ambition and Contentions about Pre-eminence, for which they were frequently reprov'd by our Lord. Even with Regard to those that were of the greatest Name among them, they relate several Things very little to their Advantage, and which, if they had been guided by a partial Regard to their Reputation, they would have conceal'd; such as the uncharitable Zeal of *James* and *John*, who were for calling for Fire from Heaven, to consume the Samaritans; for which our Saviour rebuked

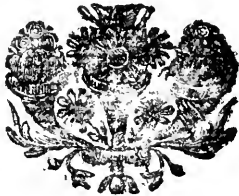
them, and told them *they knew not what Spirit they were of*; and the ambitious Request made in their Name, that *they might sit, the one at his right Hand, and the other at his Left, in his Kingdom.* After mentioning *Peter's* noble Confession, and the Commendation given him on that Account, they represent him as soon after taking upon him to rebuke our Lord for speaking of his own approaching *Sufferings and Death*, saying, *Far be it from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee*: For which he received the severest Reproof from our Saviour, that he ever gave to any of his Disciples. They also take Notice of the strange Speech he uttered at *Christ's Transfiguration*, and observe, that *he knew not what he said.* But, what is most remarkable, they give a particular Account of his shameful *Fall*, and *Denial* of his Lord and Master, notwithstanding the great Confidence he had expressed. And they represent *all the Apostles in general* as contending among themselves who should be greatest, *even the very Night in which Jesus was betrayed*, and when, one would think, their Minds should have been taken up with the Thoughts of his *Sufferings*, which he had assured them were at Hand. They do not conceal their *Sleeping*

ing in the Garden, when he had commanded them *to watch*; and the shameful Puffillanimity they shewed, when *they all forsook him and fled*; and their Backwardness to believe that *he was risen again from the Dead*, though he himself had so expressly foretold it. *The Evangelists* were under no Necessity of relating these Things that tended so much to the Disadvantage of *Christ's* most eminent *Disciples*, the first authorized Publishers of *Christianity*; or of recording their Faults and Infirmities to succeeding Ages, and which they might have omitted, without losing any of the main Facts or Discourses: And so undoubtedly they would have done, if they had been governed by selfish Views and human Passions; but they were under the Guidance of a higher *Spirit*, which led them to declare the Truth without Disguise. And, indeed, as most of these Things were transacted between *Christ and his Apostles*, and could only be known to them, or to those that had their Accounts from them; so none of the *Christians* of the succeeding Age, who all had the highest Veneration for *the Apostles*, would have recorded these Things, if they themselves had not done it; which furnisheth an additional Proof, that these Accounts

were written in the first Age. It is also a Proof of the Sincerity of *the sacred Writers*, and their strict Regard to Truth, that whereas there was a Controversy, which was zealously agitated in the apostolical Times between the *Jewish* and *Gentile Christians*, concerning the Obligation of the *Mosaical Law* and Ceremonies upon *Christians*, for Deciding of which an express Testimony from our Lord *Jesus* would undoubtedly have been of great Weight; yet there is nothing inserted in any of his Discourses clearly and expressly determining this Controversy. The Reason is, that *the Writers* do not deliver their own Sentiments, but keep close with the utmost Fidelity to his Discourses, just as he delivered them, without Addition or Alteration. It was not proper or seasonable for our blessed Lord, during his personal Ministry, to explain and declare these Things so fully and openly as *his Apostles* afterwards did, in his Name, and under the Direction of his Spirit. He contented himself with laying down Principles with admirable Wisdom, which virtually contained these Things, and from which they flowed: This was all that it was proper for him then to do, and this is all that *the Evangelists* relate him to have done.

Several

Several other Things might be offered to shew the signal Characters of Truth and Impartiality, that are to be found in *the evangelical Records*; but these may suffice to make us sensible that they justly deserve the highest Credit, and that *the Writers* of them were Persons of great Sincerity, and far from intending to impose upon Mankind. And it will carry this still farther, if it can be shewn, that the Character and Discourses of our blessed Lord, as *recorded in those Writings*, carry plain Evidences of their own Genuineness and Divinity, and are of such a Nature, that there is great Reason to think that *the Writers* of these Accounts were not capable of feigning them, even if they had been disposed to do so: And this is what we shall endeavour to evince in our next Discourse.





On the Credibility and Proofs of the Gospel-Records.

DISCOURSE XXI.

J O H N XX. 30, 31.

And many other Things truly did Jesus in the Presence of his Disciples, which are not written in this Book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have Life through his Name.

AS my Design in Chusing to insist upon these Words was to evince the Credibility and Certainty of *the Gospel Records*, and that the Accounts there given concerning our Lord *Jesus Christ* may be safely depended upon; so in the two former Discourses it was shewn,

First, That we have all the Evidence
that

that can reasonably be desired to satisfy us, that *the Books of the Evangelists were written* in the apostolical Age, *i. e.* in the Age the Facts were done, and the Laws and Doctrines taught and delivered which are there *recorded*.

Secondly, That they were *written* by Persons who were themselves perfectly acquainted with the Things they relate, and fully assured of the Truth of them.

Thirdly, That *the Writings themselves* have all the internal Characters of Fairness and Impartiality, and of Pureness and Simplicity, that *any Writings* can possibly have, and which clearly shew that *the Writers of them* were Persons of great Integrity, and had nothing but Truth in View.

I now proceed to observe, Fourthly, That the Character and Discourses of our blessed Lord, as *recorded in those Writings*, carry plain Evidences of their own Genuineness and Divinity, and are of such a Nature, that there is great Reason to think, that *the Writers* of these Accounts were not capable of feigning them, even if they had been disposed to do so.

In his Character and Discourses, as represented by *the Evangelists*, are united a wonderful Divine Dignity and Simplicity ;
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the most fervent Zeal for God and Religion, and the most unexampled Love and Charity towards Mankind; an impartial Freedom and Boldness joined with a calm Wisdom and Prudence; Greatness without Pride; Condescension without Meanness. Who can help admiring the just and sublime Notions of Religion which he teacheth, the Purity of his moral Precepts, the Beauty of his Maxims, the Solidity of his Reflections! The Instructions he gives are such as could hardly proceed but from a Mind absolutely devoted to God, and ardently desirous of promoting the Cause of Truth, Piety, and Righteousness in the World. And there is an admirable Harmony between his Discourses and his Actions, which tend mutually to illustrate each other, and both taken together, concur to form a finished Character, raised far above what the most learned and eloquent Persons have been able to form of their most eminent great and good Men; such a Character as is every Way worthy of what *Christ* professed himself to be, *the Son of God in human Flesh*, sent to instruct and to save Mankind: And how could *poor Fishermen*, if left to themselves, have been able to draw so perfect a Model!

It deserves to be remarked, that even those Things in *Christ's* Actions and Discourses,

les, which, at first View, have a disadvantageous Appearance, and which none would have mentioned that had set themselves to feign Things for his Honour, yet, when maturely weighed and considered, are quite consistent with the Excellency of his Character, and even tend to heighten it. Thus it particularly, with regard to the Account given us of his *last Sufferings*, and of his Behaviour on that Occasion, if we take the Whole together, it exhibiteth the most consummate Pattern of Patience and Fortitude, Love to God and Charity towards Mankind. There is indeed nothing in it of Fierceness of Temper, not a haughty and vainglorious Contempt of Death, not an Affectation of Fearlessness and Insensibility under Sufferings. It is very far from what the *Stoics* would have drawn for their *wise Men* in a suffering State; and yet, if closely examined, discovereth a far more excellent Temper: For here may be observed a wonderful Conjunction of Things, which to the most of Mankind might appear inconsistent, but which in Reality form the most perfect Character; a quick Sensibility of Sufferings, and the most steady Patience and Constancy under them; a true Greatness of Soul, mixed with a remarkable Tendernefs of Heart. *Christ's* Behaviour under his Sufferings hath
not

not a flashy showy Appearance; but there is a real solid Greatness and Solemnity in it, such as became a Person of his Dignity, when undergoing the most grievous Sufferings, for the Sins of Mankind. None of the ablest Orators or Philosophers ever drew such an affecting Scene, with so much Dignity and Tendernefs. This could not be owing to any superior Art in *the Evangelists*, for they are plainly destitute of all Art; but to the extraordinary Nature of the Things they relate, and to their keeping close to Truth, and representing the Facts as they really were.

What particular Characters may be observed in *Christ's Farewel Discourses to his Disciples!* *John* xiv. 15, 16. And in his Prayer to his *heavenly Father!* *John* xvii. 17. What an inimitable Grandeur and Simplicity, what Love to his *heavenly Father*, what an intire Devotedness to his Will, what Purity and Sanctity of Mind, what an amiable Concern and Tendernefs of Affection towards *his Disciples*, impossible to be counterfeited! The like Observations may be made upon many other of his Discourses, as *recorded in the Gospels*, which in a narrow Compass contain a vast Variety of the most admirable Instructions, and in which there every-where breathe the most perfect Purity, Piety, and
Charity;

Charity ; a Divine and heavenly Temper ; and the most earnest and affectionate Concern for the *Salvation of Mankind*. They have served as a Foundation for numberless excellent Books that have been since published among *Christians*, and which, though many of them *written* by Persons of great Parts and Learning, yet fall greatly short of the noble Simplicity, the Gravity, the Divine Force and Dignity, that are to be observed in our Saviour's Discourses, as related in *the Evangelical Writings*.

It hath been not unreasonably suspected, that *Plato* and *Xenophon*, who were Persons of great Ability and Eloquence, have frequently put their own Words and Sentiments into the Mouth of their Master *Socrates*, whilst they have professed to give an Account of his Discourses: But, in the Case of *the Evangelists*, there is no Room for a Suspicion of this Kind. *Matthew*, one of them, had been a *Publican* ; and the others were, for the most Part, *Fishermen*, Persons of mean Education, and who had small Advantages of Improvement. We may therefore safely say, that it was a Thing they were not capable of, to have feigned such excellent Discourses, in which there is so much profound Wisdom, and such just and sublime Sentiments of Religion, delivered

livered with so much Gravity and Authority, and yet in a plain familiar Way; Morals so pure and refined, and of so noble an Extent, far transcending any Thing that the most celebrated Doctors among the *Jews* then taught. If we could suppose such Persons as *the Apostles* capable of forming a Scheme of Religion, it would certainly not have been such as the *Christian* is; in which there are none of those favourite Notions and Prejudices which then universally possessed the Minds of the *Jews*, both of the Learned and of the Vulgar; no Regard to *the Traditions of the Elders*; no Allowance for those frequent *Divorces* which had been so customary among them; no pleasing Expectations of a *Messiah* that should raise their Notions to great secular Glory and universal Dominion. They could certainly never have thought of the *Gentiles* being incorporated into one Church and Body with the *Jews*, and admitted to equal Privileges with the ancient *People of God*: They could never have contrived such a wise and admirable Scheme of Religion, which, at the same Time that it set aside the *Jewish* Dispensation, really bore a wonderful Harmony and Correspondence to it, and fulfilled the true Intention of *the Law and the Prophets*, in the noblest Sense; a Religion pure and holy to the highest De-

gree, yet free from Extremes, and from the affected Superstitions and Strictnesses of the *Pharisees* and *Essenes*. All this is so different from what might have been expected from such Persons as *the Apostles*, if left to themselves, that it is but reasonable to believe, what they constantly declare, that they received their Instructions from *Jesus, a Divine Teacher*. They never take the Glory of this Scheme of Religion to themselves, or pretend to an higher Character than that of *his Disciples, and to teach those Things which he commanded them*: Nor would they have received these Things from him, so contrary to all their Expectations, Views, and Prejudices, if they had not been fully persuaded that he was the extraordinary Person he declared himself to be, and that what they relate of him was really true. *St. Paul*, who was the most learned and knowing of *all the Apostles*, was so far from having invented the *Christian* Scheme, that he could never have been brought to embrace it, if he had not been overcome by an almost irresistible Evidence, in Opposition to all his former Notions and Prejudices: And he constantly speaketh in the most diminishing Terms of himself, and declareth, that *he had the Doctrine*, which he taught and published to the
World,

World, *not of Man, or by Man, but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Fifthly, That which giveth a mighty Weight to all that hath been said, and which raiseth the Credit of *the evangelical Writings* as high as it can go, is, that *the Writers of them* were under a *Divine unerring Guidance.* As there is great Reason to believe that, supposing *God to have sent his Son into the World* for such important Purposes, and to have confirmed *his Divine Mission* by such illustrious Attestations, he would take Care that the Accounts both of the Instructions he delivered, and of the extraordinary Attestations given him, should be transmitted *in Writing* to succeeding Ages; so it is but just to conclude, that he would order it so that *those Writings* might be intirely depended upon for an exact and unerring Account both of Doctrines and Facts. This may be fairly concluded from the the Uniformity of the Divine Proceedings, since otherwise he would leave his own glorious Work imperfect. *The Apostles, the first authorised Publishers of Christianity,* were assisted in an extraordinary Manner *in Delivering the Things which they received from the Lord, God bearing them Witness with Signs and Wonders, and divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost;* so that these to

whom they preached were obliged to *receive the Word they delivered, not as the Word of Men, but as in Truth the Word of God.* 1 Theff. ii. 13. And, if they were thus assisted in publishing *the Gospel by Word of Mouth*, the Reason holdeth still more strongly for their being so assisted as to be kept from Error and Mistake in committing those Doctrines and Facts to *Writing* for the Instruction and Direction of all succeeding Ages. It was the express Promise of our Lord to *his Disciples*, John xiv. 26, *The Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you all Things, and bring all Things to your Remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* Where it is plainly impie'd, that *they should be divinely assisted*, in remembering and relating *Christ's* Actions and Discourses. Two of *the Evangelists* were *Apostles*, to whom this Promise was immediately made; and the two others were constant Attendants and Companions of *the Apostles*, who *wrote what they received from them*, and were themselves endued with *the extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit*, and, as St. Luke expressly declareth, *had perfect Understanding* of those Things which they relate. It confirmeth this, when we consider the wonderful Harmony which may be observed in
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the four *Gospels*, though *written* by different Persons, and at different Times. The small Variations that sometimes appear in the Accounts they give, all which admit of a fair Reconcilement, only to serve to make their Concord the more remarkable, and set it in a stronger Light: They all admirably agree in the Facts and Sentiments, and all have the same remarkable Characters of Dignity and Simplicity; of Purity, Sincerity, and an impartial Regard to Truth; which shews that *they were all written* under the Conduct of *the same Spirit*. It was because this was well known, that the *Writings of the Evangelists* were, immediately from their first Publication, received without Contradiction by the whole *Christian Church*; whereas, though there were other Accounts that were then published of these Things, as is manifest from *Luke i. 1*, they were not generally acknowledged among *Christians*, as not being so authentic, and probably having a Mixture of Things that were not to be depended upon. And, whatever Clamour hath been raised about some *spurious Gospels* which afterwards appeared, there is nothing capable of a clearer Proof than that these four *Gospels*, and these only, were universally received as of *Divine Authority* in the *Christian Church*, in the Ages

nearest *the Apostles*; and have continued to be so ever since, and have been all along regarded with the greatest Veneration.

To this it may be added, that there is a perfect Agreement between *the evangelical Writings* and the other *sacred Books of the New Testament*, all which were written, though by different Persons, in the apostolical Age. The same important Facts are every-where supposed, the same Scheme of Religion is uniformly carried on, the same Doctrines taught, and Precepts enjoined. The Miracles there referred to as done by *the Apostles* in the Name of *Christ* after his Ascension, and *the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghost*, that were poured forth upon them, were all in Pursuance of, and give a farther Confirmation of, the Facts related in *the Books of the Evangelists*, and were indeed a remarkable Completion of the Promises and Predictions of our blessed Lord as there recorded. See to this Purpose *John* vii. 38, 39. xiv. 12, 26. xvi. 13, 14. *Mark* xvi. 17, 18. *Luke* xxiv. 49.

Besides all that hath been offered, it may be farther observed,

Sixthly, That it is no small Confirmation of the Truth of the *evangelical Records*, that it was
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upon the Credit of the Facts which are there related concerning *Jesus Christ* that great Numbers both of *Jews and Gentiles* were brought to embrace the Religion of *Jesus*, even in the very first Age, when there was the best Opportunity of knowing the Truth of those Facts; and that in Opposition to their most inveterate Prejudices, and when by embracing it they exposed themselves to the bitterest Persecutions and Sufferings. As it is a Matter of Fact, which the most obstinate Infidel will not deny, that there was such a Person as *Jesus Christ* who appeared in *Judea* in the Reign of *Tiberius*, as a *Teacher sent from God*, and who was at length put to a cruel and ignominious Death by the *Jews*, or by the *Romans* at their Instigation; so it is no less certain, that, notwithstanding he was *crucified*, and therefore the most unlikely Person in the World to be regarded as the *Messiah, the Son of God, and the Saviour of Mankind*, yet there were great Numbers both of *Jews and Gentiles* who, in that very Age, believed in him as such, and adhered with an inviolable Constancy to the Religion published in his Name. It is also undeniable, that this Religion had nothing in it to flatter the Vices and Passions of Men, and was quite contrary to the prevailing Notions and Prejudices both of *Jews*

and *Heathens*: That it tended intirely to subvert the whole Frame of the *Pagan* Superstition and Idolatry, which was established by the Laws of the *Roman* Empire, and wrought into their civil Constitution, and upon which they believed the Fortunes and Prosperity of their Empire depended: That it also tended to subvert the pleasing Schemes the *Jews* had formed, and with which they were infinitely delighted, concerning the temporal Grandeur and Glory of the *Messiah's* Kingdom, and to deprive them, as they thought, of their most distinguishing and boasted Privileges: And accordingly it is certain that both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, however differing in other Things, joined in endeavouring to crush this Religion, and in persecuting the Professors of it. It is also a Fact that will not be contested, that the first Propagators of this Religion were Persons seemingly mean and despicable, that made no Ostentation of Learning or Eloquence, and had no Wealth, Power, or Interest, nor any worldly Advantages to recommend them, or to engage the Attention of Mankind. If therefore they had offered no other Proof but their bare Word in Confirmation of *the Divine Authority of a crucified Jesus*, and of the Truth of a Religion so opposite to the prevailing Inclinations and

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Prejudices both *Jews* and *Heathens*, they could have had no Expectation of being able to impose such a Scheme as this upon Mankind. But, the Truth is, they produced the most convincing Proofs of *Christ's Divine Mission*: They published to the World the holy and excellent Doctrines and Laws which they had received from him, and which were every Way worthy of God: At the same Time they appealed to the many illustrious *Miracles* he had wrought during his personal Ministry, Works far transcending all human Power, and which were done so publicly in the View of *Multitudes*, that they could challenge their bitterest Enemies to contradict them. They also declared, that, though he was *crucified*, he *rose again from the Dead*, as he himself had foretold, and *showed himself alive, after his Passion, by many infallible Proofs, of which they themselves were Witnesses*; and that not only his *twelve Apostles* frequently saw him after his Resurrection, but that he was *seen of above five hundred Persons* at once, who all concurred in giving Testimony to it, and were ready to *seal the Truth of it with their Blood*. And, as a farther Proof of his *Resurrection and Exaltation*, they testified that, in a few Days after his *Ascension into Heaven*, of which they were also *Eye-Witnesses*, he had,

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according to his own Promise, poured forth *the Holy Spirit in his extraordinary Gifts upon his Disciples*; and that this was done, in the most public Manner possible, on the Day of *Pentecost*, when Thousands of Persons were gathered together at *Jerusalem* from all Parts of the then known World; who with Astonishment heard them *speaking in their several Tongues the wonderful Things of God*. And of these *extraordinary Gifts and Powers* they continued to give undeniable Proofs, wherever they went *preaching the Word, by speaking divers Kinds of Tongues, which they had never learned, and performing the most stupendous Miracles, in the Name of a crucified and risen Jew*, and by Power derived from him. And, what gave a mighty Confirmation to all this, there was a great Variety of the like *extraordinary Gifts and Powers* conferred, *in the Name of Jesus*, upon many of those that by their Ministry embraced *the Christian Faith*. The Evidence arising from all these Things was so strong, and their Adversaries were so little able to confute those Facts, that there were great Numbers both of *Jews* and *Heathens* who, in that very Age, forsaking the Religion of their Ancestors, and their darling Prejudices and Vices, embraced the Religion of *Jesus*, to which they could have no possible Inducement

ment, but a thorough Conviction of it's Truth and Divine Original, of which they were so persuaded as to persevere in the Profession of it, *even to the Death*, in the Face of the greatest Difficulties, Persecutions, and Dangers.

The Sum of this Part of the Argument is this, That it is utterly inconceivable that either *Jews* or *Gentiles* could have been brought to believe in one that had been *ignominiously crucified*, as *the Lord and Christ, the Son of God, and Saviour of the World*, if they had not had a *full Assurance* of the Truth of the Things which are related concerning *Jesus* in the Gospels; his illustrious *Miracles*, his admirable Discourses, his holy and excellent Character, the Attestations given him *from Heaven* and especially his *Resurrection from the Dead* and consequent *Exaltation*. It was only owing to the strong and convincing Evidence given of these Things, in the very Age in which they were done, *God himself bearing Witness* to the first Publishers of *Christianity* in the most extraordinary Manner, that a Religion, propagated by such mean Instruments, destitute of all worldly Advantages, and which had the inveterate Prejudices and vicious Appetites of Men engaged against it, made so astonishing a Progress, in a few
Years,

Years, though a great Part of the vast *Roman* Empire, then the most knowing and civilised Part of the Earth; and that in Opposition to all that the Powers of this World could do for suppressing it; tho' it exposed it's Votaries to all Manner of Sufferings, Reproaches, and Persecutions, which they endured with an unparallel'd Constancy, and even *with Joy*.

The several Considerations that have been insisted upon, in order to evince the Credibility and Certainty of *the evangelical Records*, when taken together, form as strong an Evidence as could reasonably be desired in such a Case: And, after what hath been said, there needs not much be added, with regard to what I proposed, in the last Place *viz.* to shew, that, as these *Writings* were originally pure and divine, so they are transmitted safe and uncorrupted to us. Several of the Arguments that were brought to prove that *these sacred Writings* may be fairly traced up, through every Age, from our own Time to that of *the Apostles*, and can be shewn to have been still extant, do also prove, that they have been preserved without any material Corruption or Alteration: They have been, all along, from the Time of their being first published, received by *Christians* with great Veneration; they
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were read in their sacred religious Assemblies as of *Divine Authority*; they were soon translated into various Languages, and dispersed into many Hands in different Nations; numberless Quotations have been drawn from them, and they have been constantly appealed to, in every Age, in the Controversies that have arisen among all the different Sects and Parties of *Christians*; so that it is manifest that a general Corruption of all the Copies, if any had attempted it, would have been an impossible Thing. And, though it cannot be denied, that there have been great Corruptions among professed *Christians*, yet it is evident, in Fact, that they have not altered *those sacred Writings*, in Favour of those Corruptions. They have not corrupted or interpolated them, in those Instances in which it was most their Interest to have corrupted them; and therefore it may be fairly concluded that they have not corrupted them at all. And indeed they still retain all the Characters of original Purity, Truth, and Integrity, that *any Writings* can possibly have, as has been already observed; and not one Mark of the contrary: And the Religion of *Jesus* still appeareth there in it's primitive genuine Simplicity, without any of the corrupt Additions of after Ages, which may be still more effectually

fectually detected and confuted from *those Writings*. And, as to the various Readings which some have made a mighty Objection, and which, without a perpetual Miracle, are unavoidable in a great Number of Copies transcribed by different Persons in different Ages, they are so far from inferring a general Corruption of those Writings, that they furnish a full Proof of the Contrary, and a most effectual Remedy against it, as is known to all those that are acquainted with these Matters. We have therefore the greatest Reason to conclude, that *these holy Books*, which we have now in our Hands, are the same that they were, when they came out of the Hands of *the Apostles and Evangelists*, without any Alterations of Consequence either in the Facts or Doctrines: And therefore, by Virtue of these, we have an Account that may justly be depended upon of the Discourses and Actions of our blessed Lord, and the admirable Scheme of Religion which he taught. Nor can we desire a more satisfying Evidence, except we should insist upon our *seeing and bearing* those Things in our own Persons, in order to our believing them, which would be to insist upon a manifest Impossibility, *viz.* that we should be *Eye-Witnesses* of Facts that were done several Ages before we were

were born; or at least it is to demand that *all the extraordinary Things* that are related in *the Gospels* concerning *Jesus* should be done over again for our Conviction. And at this Rate *all those wonderful Facts* must be repeated in every Age, in every Country, and in the View of every single Person; for one hath as much Right to demand this as another. And how extremely absurd would this be, and unworthy of the Divine Wisdom, I need not take any Pains to shew: And it were to be wished, that Persons would seriously consider, how they will be able to justify themselves to the great Governor of the World, for *refusing and rejecting the Revelation God hath given us by his Son*, under Pretence of not having sufficient Evidence, when it comes to us with all the Evidence that can reasonably be desired in such a Case, or that the Nature of the Thing will admit of, and which they themselves would account sufficient in any other Case. I shall conclude this Subject with two Reflections:

First, How thankful should we be to God that he hath, in his wise and good Providence, ordered it so that Things of such mighty Importance are transmitted to us in *authentic Records*, so that by them we still have a sure Account of the Religion of

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Jesus in it's genuine uncorrupted Purity and Simplicity ! Let us prize these sacred *Writings* as our most valuable Treasure, and make them the Subject of our frequent Meditations. Let us often consider the glorious Characters of *Divinity* that shine forth in them, the excellent Ideas there given us of God and Religion, the Purity and Holiness of the Precepts, *the exceeding great and precious Promises* which are set before us, and the Power of the Motives which are there urged to engage us to the Practice of universal Righteousness ; that they have not the least Traces of a worldly Spirit and Design, nor is there any Thing in them to humour and gratify the corrupt Lusts and Appetites of Men ; that the manifest Tendency of the Whole is to promote the Glory of God, and the Cause of Piety and Virtue in the World ; to inspire Men with an Abhorrence of Vice and Sin, and with the Love of God and Goodness ; to raise them to the most glorious Hopes, and to a Divine and heavenly Temper of Mind. The more we consider these Things, the more shall we be convinced that they had not their Original from Fraud and Imposture ; that they *come from God, and lead to God*. Especially if we ourselves feel their happy Influence upon our own Souls, in *purifying our Hearts*, animating

DISCOURSE XXI. 42

mating us to the Practice of every Virtue, *comforting us in all our Tribulation*, and forming us to a godlike Disposition: Then shall we have *the Testimony within us* of the Truth and Divinity of the Gospel; our *Faith* shall be established as upon a *Rock*; we shall not be *tossed to and fro with every Wind of Doctrine*, nor be allured by the specious Pretences of those who *promise Men Liberty*, whilst they themselves are the *Servants of Corruption*.

This leads me to a second Reflection upon this Subject, *viz.* That the proper Use we should make of these sacred *Writings* should be to engage us to *believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that, believing, we may have Life in his Name*: For the *Evangelist John* here assureth us, that this is the End for which they were *written*: And indeed the Things there related concerning the admirable Character and Discourses of our blessed Lord, the Instructions he gave, and the illustrious Attestations which confirmed *his Divine Mission*, taken together, form an Evidence sufficient to satisfy an attentive and well-disposed Mind. But let us not content ourselves with a mere speculative Assent, which will be of small Avail to our Salvation and Happiness: Our *Faith* must be a practical vital Persuasion, *a Faith working by*

DISCOURSE XXI.

Love, and issuing in a dutiful and sincere Obedience : For it is when we thus *believe that we have shall Life in his Name*, that is, shall obtain that *eternal Life*, which is the *Gift of God through Jesus Christ to all those that really believe and obey him*. And how mightily should it recommend *the Gospel* to our Affection and Esteem, that *Life and Immortality is there brought into a clear and open Light*, and that we are so plainly directed *in the Way that leadeth to it !* To that *eternal Life* let us continually aspire by Faith, and Love, and holy Obedience ; and then we may upon good Grounds hope that, when we depart hence, *we shall be with Christ, and shall be made Partakers of his heavenly Glory*.

THE END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.







